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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to present systematic findings concerning bias in TV news coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign and to describe the kinds of coverage that the candidates and parties received during the campaign. News about the election was analyzed from weekday network evening news programs, AP day and night wire coverage, a daily newspaper that endorsed McGovern ("Washington Post"), and a daily that endorsed Nixon ("Chicago Tribune"). The first section of the document is an introduction to the study. The second section is a listing of the findings of the study. The third section examines perceptions of bias in the news including bases of perceptions of bias in television news, partisan choice and perceived bias, and cognitions about news and perceived bias. The final section is a discussion of the findings: structural bias was clearly evident in much of the analysis; each candidate benefited from the way sources of news were handled; if either candidate gained from issue coverage during the 1972 election, it was Nixon; issues were covered differently on television and in newspapers; and perceptions of biased TV news coverage had a variety of effects on voting behavior and attitudes about the medium. (TS)

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BIASED NEWS IN THE 1972 CAMPAIGN:

A MULTI-MEDIA ANALYSIS

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Winter, 1976

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BIASED NEWS IN THE 1972 CAMPAIGN:
A MULTI-MEDIA ANALYSIS*

I. Introduction

Spiro Agnew only reinvigorated an old conflict with his charges of liberal bias in the news. News media and politicians coexist in an environment perhaps best characterized as unstable and dynamic: both news personnel and politicians are essential to each other in different ways, and yet both news personnel and politicians operate within a context in which the causes and consequences of the other's behavior are frequently at odds. News personnel need access to newsworthy events that politicians control in large part, and politicians need channels of access to the public that news personnel control in large part. Politicians are able to distribute largess to their friends as well as sanctions to their enemies; so are news personnel (Whiteside, 1975). The resulting conflict and instability endemic within this context contribute to the maintenance of a democratic way of life, at least when the system functions within reasonable bounds (White, 1973; Crouse, 1972; Rubin, 1967; McGinness, 1970; Weaver, 1972; and Epstein, 1973; and Epstein, 1975).

Accusations and denials of bias in news coverage about public affairs remain one of the more often encountered political charges associated with partisan politics and news reporting in American journalism (Keeley, 1971; Efron, 1971; Keogh, 1972; Cirino, 1971). But much of the rhetoric is polemical in character. Each candidate for office is certain that the important major media in his area are not reporting his positions on issues and campaign events in the most favorable light, and that his stature is suffering in comparison to that of his opponent. Opponents are equally certain that the

converse is true. Advocates of causes of all varieties strive to obtain coverage of favored positions, and access by one group is immediately challenged by demands for "equal time" and for "fairness" by competing concerns. The purpose of this study is to present systematic findings concerning bias in TV news coverage of the 1972 presidential campaign, and to describe the kinds of coverage that the candidates and parties received during the campaign.

Some Notions of Bias. Weaver (1972) argues cogently that simple descriptions of the way that political candidates and issues have been covered by a medium are insufficient to establish the presence or absence of partisan bias in coverage. If candidate A receives less favorable coverage than candidate B on CBS evening news, for instance, this does not necessarily mean that CBS is biased against candidate A or for candidate B.

Several plausible explanations for the coverage exist: 1) candidate A has less favorable characteristics than candidate B. The news accurately reflects the true situation and there is an imbalance between the candidates with regard to a set of values that are relevant to the political situations that are being reported. Indeed, political bias (in the form of silence) would exist if coverage failed to reflect the imbalance between A and B. 2) Non-political reasons associated with the nature of the media account for differences in coverage. Candidate B engages in activities that are more profitable for the network to report (other things more or less equal) than candidate A. Coverage of these activities is likely to attract a larger audience, improve network ratings, and also meet canons of newsworthiness. 3) A particular situation exists so that candidate B's campaign staff plans a strategy to obtain greater news coverage than candidate A's news strategy involves. The campaign staff achieves the goal by seeing to it that the

candidate makes himself more readily and easily available to news media, and that many of the incentives which influence the nature of news coverage are exploited. 4) CBS may indeed be biased against candidate A and biased for candidate B, and this bias is simply reflected in news coverage of the two candidates.

News coverage explained in terms of any of these models may have grave consequences for the political fortunes of the candidates, although only the latter model fits what is normally termed political bias in polemics on the subject. Bias is based on selecting some information rather than other information to be included in news reporting about political events. And, although all reporting involves selection of information, the criteria employed in making the selection and the consequences of the selection define the nature and extent of bias or subjectivity in news coverage.

Objective, or unbiased, coverage involves selection no less than biased coverage. But unbiased coverage includes material that is reported in an equitable fashion (Westerstahl, 1972). The same material would be included in a news story in the same context regardless of the candidate or issues involved. A sense of equity dictates that coverage of similar events be similar, and that selectivity be based on implicit theories about events and about newsworthiness that are generalized beyond simple partisan sides in an election or controversy about an issue.

Selectivity of material that arises because of the characteristics peculiar to a medium results in structural bias (Epstein, 1973). Television network news is a business; it is a business that bases its revenues on audience ratings. News must be produced that attracts and holds audiences, and this means that news must entertain as well as inform. News stories must include pictorially interesting material, material that excites viewer interest, and

material that can be presented in a relatively abbreviated and simplified thematic form, since time, rather than depth, is at a premium. So too is drama and conflict (Birt, 1975). And the economics of TV news staffing and transmission of material require use of location rather than action shots in many instances, a fair amount of coverage of political events that are "convenient," if not staged exclusively, for television news. It is no accident that scheduling of campaign appearances frequently is done with needs of TV newsmen in mind (Crouse, 1972).

Selectivity that is influenced by particular situations results in "situational bias." In such cases, coverage is influenced by a set of circumstances that may or may not be related to structural biases of a medium. But what is included in news coverage of an issue or candidate would be different under different general circumstances. It is possible that a candidate runs a particularly aggressive campaign and receives more coverage than similar candidates who do not run similar campaigns. Sensitivity to some issues rather than to other issues, for instance, may be due to a particular historical sequence. It is likely that American involvement in C.I.A. "covert operations" will receive more media coverage for a time following Vietnam than they did prior to Vietnam, or that corrupt campaign practices will receive more scrutiny for a time following Watergate than they did prior to Watergate. Media attention is focused on events simply because the events themselves and prior coverage of them have sensitized the media and the public to these concerns (McCombs and Shaw, 1972).

Campaign strategies are very directly related to news coverage. Thus, particular campaigns may define a unique set of circumstances that have direct implications for news coverage. McGovern, an underdog in election polls and a maverick in his own party, sought news coverage during the 1972 campaign

(Crouse, 1972: 340); Nixon, an incumbent who does not appear to have possessed a television personality (McGinness, 1970) and who related to newsmen only with difficulty (White, 1973; White, 1975; and Crouse, 1972: 340), shied away from personal coverage that was not under the absolute control of his staff.

Selectivity that is based on political prejudices of news personnel, individually or collectively, results in political or partisan bias. Some material is chosen rather than other material in order to bolster a point of view or the political fortunes of a candidate. Although the selectivity may be based on untruths or distortions, it is far more likely that factual material is simply selected and presented in a way that supports or undermines a political position. Politically biased coverage is unequitable coverage of political candidates or issues.

II. Method

The basic problem in assessing bias in news coverage is to discern a baseline of factual material against which news content may be evaluated, and then to distinguish instances of partisan, structural, and situational bias from relatively objective coverage (Westerstahl, 1972). The analyst must rely on mass media content in making all of these judgments if a study is designed to assess news coverage about a broad spectrum of events, since independent verification is seldom feasible. It may be possible to examine some particular event in great detail and then to evaluate news coverage about it in terms of independent observations (Lang and Lang, 1968); but case studies are hardly useful for describing general political coverage. It is useful to examine the designs of several of the more prominent studies of news bias in order to appreciate the baseline problem more fully.

Efron (1971) concluded that a "Democratic-liberal-left" bias was present in news coverage on each network during the peak of the 1968 presidential campaign. She compared network coverage by counting the number of words that appeared in sentences which had been coded as favorable or unfavorable to presidential candidates or selected issues. Conclusions were based on the view that similar proportions of favorable and unfavorable material should appear in news about candidates and issues. Lefever (1974) concluded that CBS coverage of the U.S. military was unfavorably biased because more unfavorable than favorable material was included in stories about it. A paucity of critical stories about the Soviet military was present at the same time on CBS.

Stevenson and co-workers (1973) "untwisted" The News Twisters by failing to replicate Efron's findings based on a recoding of CBS transcripts for the period of time that Efron's study had covered. The number of lines of text devoted to each candidate and a series of content characteristics associated with stories lead the analysts to conclude that little bias was present in CBS's coverage for 1968. Humphrey and Nixon received about the same amount of coverage and each received about the same kind of coverage. Issues were, moreover, found to be associated with each campaign in about the same way. Meadow (1974), found a high degree of similarity among several media and networks shortly prior to the 1972 election.

Using a different approach to content analysis, Russo (1971-1972) concluded that there was little anti-Vietnam bias in network coverage during 1969 and 1970. Statements in news stories were rated on a "pro- and anti-Vietnam" scale, and ratings then compared. In a much less rigorous study reported by the American Institute for Political Communication (1972), researchers concluded that bias "in favor of the Democrats" and "against Vietnam" involvement was present in news coverage during the 1968 campaign. But

so little attention was given to reliability and validity and so much emphasis placed on "spontaneity" in classifying news content in the study that it is impossible to interpret the findings.

Westerstahl (1972) evaluated coverage of foreign affairs in Swedish newspapers and television programming. Comparisons of news content in several types of media and for several events provided the basis for his conclusions about the range of bias in Swedish news. His conclusions, in turn, lead to a series of policy recommendations concerning news dissemination in Sweden.

The most common baseline that has appeared in studies of news bias has been to compare the amount of favorable and unfavorable news content and to conclude that bias is present whenever the two are not roughly equal in amount. But assessing the extent to which news is biased based only on the ratio of favorable to unfavorable content is of questionable usefulness, since there simply is no reason to assume that aspects of campaigns, candidates, and issues are usually (or even occasionally) distributed in equal proportions. Some events, some practices, and some candidates are simply worse than others.

An even more vexing problem involves trying to disentangle political, structural, and situational kinds of bias in news coverage. Requisites for solving this problem include building variation from several sources into a design: situational bias can be discerned only if coverage of similar events in differing situations is studied; and structural bias can be discerned only if coverage of similar events in differing kinds of media are included. A very rigorous test of political bias, then, would arise from differences in coverage about political issues and candidates within a single kind of medium once the structural and situational biases had been removed. This "residual" notion of political bias may be overly restrictive, since both structural and situational biases can have political consequences and since political

bias may be nurtured by other forms of bias, but the polemics concerning bias have focused on political bias to the exclusion of other forms regardless of the consequences.

News about the election was analyzed from weekday network evening news programs, AP day and night wire coverage, a daily newspaper that had endorsed McGovern (the Washington Post), and a daily that had endorsed Nixon (the Chicago Tribune). About equal amounts of news coverage reported before and after the first day of September, the date normally regarded as the beginning of the campaign, were included in order to provide a lengthy time frame for analysis.[1]

Weekday evening network news stories (N=4349, 1420 on CBS, 1576 on NBC, 1353 on ABC) about political affairs that were broadcast between July 10, 1972, and November 6, 1972, were included in the analysis. The news story was the unit of analysis, and a variety of characteristics of each news story was coded from videotaped materials acquired from the Vanderbilt Television News Archive, and from the printed texts of news stories. For purposes of the present analysis, stories that emphasized the major party candidates (McGovern or Nixon), the major party campaigns, and key issues (e.g., Vietnam) are included.

AP wire stories (N=4466) carried between August 12, 1972, and November 6, 1972, were also included in the analysis. Material between July 10 and August 11 could not be retrieved for the project. Coders first read through wire material for the day wire, recorded the stories that were reported, and physically assembled material that was relevant for a given story. The procedure was then repeated for the night wire. Assembly of materials for each story was necessary because portions of material relevant to a given story are sent out over the wire in segments as they are received. Thus, for a

story that is developing, a number of details will appear in separate installments, and material must be combined in order to include all relevant details in coverage.

Stories about the candidates and the campaign from the Washington Post (N=1183) and the Chicago Tribune (N=905) between July 10, 1972, and November 6, 1972, in Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday issues were located and coded according to rules and conventions developed for coding of the other material.[2]

Both frequency and amount of coverage were measured. Frequencies were based on the number of news stories about various aspects of the election in each medium. This figure was the number of distinct news stories on CBS, NBC, and ABC, and in the Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune, and the number of distinct topics or events concerning some aspect of the election that was included in either day or night AP wire reports. Amount of coverage was measured in seconds (or minutes) of TV news time, column inches of news story coverage in newspapers, and wire copy inches (triple-spaced teletype copy) in AP wire reports. A high level of agreement between frequency and amount of coverage was discerned in analysis.

Newspaper coverage was measured on a microfilm reader so that the column inches reported were somewhat less than the column inches that had initially appeared in the Chicago Tribune or the Washington Post. News stories that were included in the analysis were, however, measured in a standardized way so that relative amounts of coverage are comparable. Comparisons of percentages based on frequencies and on amounts of coverage resulted in identical conclusions. Thus, only percentages based on frequencies of stories or reports are presented after the initial descriptive information below.

III. Findings

General Emphasis. Network television news, the two newspapers, and the AP wire emphasized different kinds of coverage during the 1972 election, but differences were probably a result of structural characteristics of the media. Stories about candidates, parties and partisan campaigns, and issues presented in conjunction with either candidates, or parties and campaigns, or both were included.[3] Issues that may have been pertinent to the fortunes of the candidates or parties-campaigns but which failed to mention either candidates or parties explicitly were omitted from the analysis.

Each medium devoted the most attention to news that emphasized issues in conjunction with candidates, and parties and campaigns. But newspapers gave by far the largest proportion of such coverage to all three topics, while TV news gave by far the least coverage to simultaneous emphasis of all three. About 71.3 percent of the partisan stories in the Tribune (and 77.2 percent of the column inches) and 72.5 percent of the partisan stories in the Post (82.3 percent of the column inches) emphasized issues together with both candidates and parties-campaigns. In contrast, only about one-third of the partisan coverage of each network (33.9 percent of the stories and 40.0 percent of the time on CBS, 32.3 percent of the stories and 39.6 percent of the time on NBC, and 31.3 percent of the stories and 35.9 percent of the time on ABC) emphasized issues in conjunction with both candidates and parties-campaigns. About half (47.0 percent of the topics and 57.8 percent of the report inches) of partisan AP wire coverage was about issues in conjunction with the other two topical areas.

(PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

TV news, in contrast, was more likely to stress stories about both can-

didates and parties-campaigns, and about both issues and parties-campaigns than either newspaper or AP wire reports. Finally, newspapers were less likely to cover stories that emphasized only candidates or only parties. The same conclusions were reached whether frequency or amount of coverage was compared.

Thus, evidence for the existence of structural bias in 1972 election campaign coverage was clear. Little variation in the kinds of concerns emphasized within media compared to much greater variation between media is shown in Table 1. Newspapers apparently gave greater depth and included greater complexity in stories about politics; TV news was biased toward campaign coverage, with all the excitement, hoopla, color, drama, and ease in locating film crews and reporters that are part of American presidential politics. TV news was able to provide fewer stories and less time to particular topics than the printed media. What TV news required was greater excitement than other news media.

Candidate and Party-Campaign Coverage. Stories that emphasized Nixon or McGovern and the Democratic or Republican Parties were prominent in coverage during the 1972 campaign. Amount and frequency of attention by major media is nearly as great a concern of partisans as the quality and content of the coverage. Many citizens perceive favorable attributes of preferred candidates and unfavorable attributes of their opponents in media messages regardless of what news stories say about the candidates, since selectivity in perceptions, retention and recall tends to be influential in interpreting media messages. Name recognition and familiarity are also important in formation of candidate preferences, although recognition and familiarity are substantially more important in preference formation during primary elections than during general elections in which partisan cues are also likely to be engaged.

McGovern and the Democrats received greater attention than Nixon and the Republicans in network television news coverage during the 1972 campaign.[4]

In contrast, Nixon received greater attention than McGovern in both newspapers and AP wire reports. The Democrats had greater coverage in AP wire reports and in the Chicago Tribune than the Republicans, while the GOP had greater coverage in the Washington Post. Differences in the frequency of coverage paralleled differences in the amount of coverage; but contrasts among media were small regardless of which metric was employed.

(PLACE TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Networks and newspapers also covered the parties-campaigns and the candidates in different ways. ABC, for instance, devoted more attention to McGovern in comparison to CBS and NBC. And ABC devoted an even larger proportion of stories about the Democratic Party and campaign. The Washington Post gave greater coverage to Nixon than the Chicago Tribune, while the proportion of AP wire reports about the candidates closely paralleled that of the Tribune. The Post also paid more attention to the Republican Party and campaign than either the Tribune or the AP wire.

The Post's greater attention to the GOP and to candidate Nixon may have stemmed from its location in Washington and its status as the "home town" newspaper in the District of Columbia. It is also possible that greater TV news emphasis of McGovern and the Democratic Party-campaign arose from a situation in which their status as challengers who mounted a highly active campaign against opponents who did not use the incumbent head of the ticket as a cutting edge in their media campaign. Surrogates did much of the GOP campaigning. Of course, these observations do not account for differences between ABC's candidate and party-campaign coverage and that of CBS and NBC. Some hint of partisan bias was present in the news coverage of the 1972 campaign; but evidence of structural and situational biases in this coverage was much stronger. A modicum of caution suggests, however, that qualitative

aspects of this coverage be scrutinized more closely.

1. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Candidate Coverage. News stories about the major party candidates were judged to be favorable to a candidate when they associated attributes of success with his candidacy. Attributes of success included winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, a hard worker, diligent, or responsible, being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval. News stories were judged to be unfavorable to a candidate when they associated attributes of failure with his candidacy. Attributes of failure included losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible, and being greeted by an unfavorable crowd reaction or disapproval. News stories that could not be classified as predominantly favorable or unfavorable were classified as neutral.

Nixon received more favorable coverage in each medium. McGovern, moreover, received more unfavorable coverage in each medium except AP wire reports. Nixon received slightly more frequent (but a much greater amount of) unfavorable coverage than McGovern in wire coverage. But the frequency and amount of unfavorable news coverage differed more between kinds of media than within kinds of media, despite variation among network and newspaper treatment of Nixon and McGovern.

The extent to which network, newspaper, and AP wire coverage was neutral characterized news coverage about Nixon and McGovern more than any other aspect. In no case could more than one-third of the coverage be classified as either favorable or unfavorable. Television news stories were most likely to be neutral and newspaper stories were least likely to be neutral. AP wire reports more closely resembled TV news than newspapers. It is important to reiterate that a story had to be clearly favorable or unfavorable to one candidate or the other in order to avoid being classified as neutral. Thus,

the greater ambiguity of television news and the greater ambiguities stemming from attempts to meet FCC requisites of "fairness" in news coverage may have contributed to greater neutrality in video news (Epstein, 1973).

(PLACE TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

Nixon received more favorable and less unfavorable coverage on CBS and ABC. McGovern gained more favorable coverage on NBC news, but he also gained more unfavorable coverage on NBC. From a slightly different perspective, Nixon was most likely to receive favorable coverage on ABC. A larger proportion of time on ABC, however, was also devoted to unfavorable Nixon news, while unfavorable Nixon coverage appeared in a slightly greater proportion of stories on CBS than on the other networks. NBC news about McGovern was considerably more favorable and less unfavorable than McGovern news on other networks. ABC news was most unfavorable to McGovern.

Thus, ABC might be labeled as the most "pro-Nixon" and "anti-McGovern" of the networks. But this conclusion would probably be a mistake, because it would over-simplify the actual news coverage of the candidates. ABC, for instance, gave greater total exposure to McGovern. Differences among the networks in the proportions of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable coverage, moreover, were not very great. Finally, the most common coverage given to each candidate was neutral; the modal coverage failed to be either clearly favorable or clearly unfavorable to the fortunes of either candidate.

The Chicago Tribune was both more favorable and more unfavorable to Nixon than was the Washington Post. The same was true of McGovern coverage. Although differences were fairly slight, the Post included more stories classified as neutral than the Tribune. Both papers, however, contained a greater proportion of favorable Nixon and a greater proportion of unfavorable McGovern. Thus, it would appear that Nixon was the net beneficiary of both

Tribune and Post news coverage; the same was also true of network news.

AP wire coverage was slightly more favorable to Nixon than to McGovern. But wire reports also tended very slightly to be more unfavorable to Nixon. Many wire stories about the candidates were neutral (over six in ten), and favorable and unfavorable coverage was very nearly balanced in a statistical sense.

2. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Party-Campaign Coverage. News stories about the two major parties and campaign activities were evaluated in a manner similar to the way that candidate stories were evaluated. Stories that emphasized attributes of success or behavior implying success or favorable treatment were classified as favorable to a party or campaign, while stories that emphasized failure or behavior implying failure or unfavorable treatment were classified as unfavorable. Stories in which neither favorable nor unfavorable treatment predominated were classified as neutral.

The Republican Party and campaign received a greater amount of favorable coverage. The Democrats received more unfavorable coverage, although important exceptions were evident. A much larger proportion of newspaper coverage than coverage in other media was favorable to each party-campaign, while a smaller proportion of AP wire coverage was favorable. Network news and AP wire coverage was more likely than newspaper coverage to be neutral. Each kind of medium reported about the same proportion of unfavorable news about the major parties and campaigns; but considerable variation among the TV networks and among the two newspapers was evident.

(PLACE TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE)

The GOP received more favorable and unfavorable coverage on NBC than on CBS or ABC, while the GOP received the least unfavorable coverage on ABC. At the same time, the Democratic Party-campaign received the most favorable

and least unfavorable coverage on NBC, while it received the least favorable and most unfavorable coverage on ABC. The GOP gained a larger proportion of favorable coverage on each network; but this disparity was least on CBS and greatest on NBC. The Democrats also gained more unfavorable coverage on the networks, and this disparity was largest on ABC, and smallest on NBC.

The Tribune was more favorable and less unfavorable in coverage of the GOP than the Post, although the Tribune was also slightly more favorable in coverage of the Democratic-Party-campaign than the Post. The Post, in contrast, was slightly less likely to have been unfavorable to the Democratic Party and campaign.

The AP wire was much more likely than either newspaper to have been neutral in coverage of both parties and campaigns. Wire reports were also less likely to have included favorable emphases in coverage of Parties-campaigns. From a slightly different vantage point, the wire reports were both more favorable and more unfavorable to the GOP than to the Democrats in news reporting. Disparities in unfavorable reporting about the Republican Party-campaign were about three times as prevalent as unfavorable coverage of their opponents.

Sources of News. The most important source of information in news stories was coded for each story. Sources were grouped into general categories of Republicans, Democrats, institutional (including executive, judicial, legislative branches of government, as well as other institutions), interest groups, foreign, experts, and other sources. When no other source was mentioned in a story, the reporter was coded as the source. The more important non-news source was coded whenever two or more non-news sources were included in a story. Thus, news reporters formed a residual category of sources; they were indicative that news agencies had failed to use inde-

pendent sources of information (at least as far as manifest content of a story was concerned). Other sources were excluded from analysis.

1. Types of Partisan Sources. Partisan sources were most frequently used in news about major party candidates. Republicans were most frequently sources for Nixon stories and Democrats sources for McGovern sources. The Demorats, however, were more likely to serve as sources. Democrats were more likely to be sources of Nixon news in each newspaper, AP wire reports, and in NBC and ABC news than were Republicans to be sources of McGovern news stories. CBS news was an exception, but the percentage differences between partisan sources in CBS news was slight. Thus, the Democrats may have gained some advantage because of their role as sources of news stories, since they gained both exposure and credibility. It is significant to note that percentage fluctuations among media were not great in use of sources, although the print media were a bit more likely to use GOP sources than TV news.

(PLACE TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE)

Institutional sources were much more likely to be associated with Nixon than McGovern stories; this tendency was strongest in television news. The differences among media probably reflect the greater ease with which TV crews could use institutional sources of news--a structurally generated bias--as well as the presence of "surrogate" primarily institutionally-linked campaigners by the GOP during the campaign--a situationally generated bias.

Experts were much less frequently used as sources in candidate stories, although experts appeared most frequently in AP wire reports and least frequently in television news. Foreign sources also infrequently appeared in any of the media. But Nixon was more likely to receive coverage that included foreign sources than McGovern (except in the Post), a not unexpected

aspect of an incumbent President. Differences between the candidates were greatest on television. In contrast, McGovern stories were more likely to have interest group sources. This may have been a reflection of the greater number of socially distinctive groups included in the "Democratic coalition" and of problems that the Democratic standard bearer had in trying to organize a rebellious coalition during the 1972 campaign.

Nixon coverage was less likely to include any source beyond news personnel. The trend toward avoiding non-news sources was stronger on ABC and NBC than on CBS; it was also strongest in television coverage. The print media, especially the AP wire reports, were more likely to use independent sources. The Post was more likely than the Tribune to include independent sources in candidate coverage. Trends in using source material were more likely reflective of news practices than of political prejudices, since the relative use of independent sources in Nixon and McGovern coverage was parallel.

A different pattern of news sources appeared in coverage of the major parties and campaigns. Democratic Party sources were more likely to appear in news about both major parties than Republican Party sources in television news, but not in printed news. The largest proportion of Democratic sources in stories about Republicans (40.9 percent) and about Democrats (40.9 percent) were carried on ABC. ABC also broadcast the lowest proportion of stories with Republican sources about Republicans (21.4 percent) or Democrats (21.6 percent).

(PLACE TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE)

TV news and newspapers also diverged in the use of institutional news sources in coverage of the major parties and campaigns. Institutional sources were slightly more likely to be used in news about the GOP than about the

Democrats. Network differences in party coverage on television were slight, although ABC was more likely to use institutional sources in Democratic rather than Republican coverage.

Differences in the use of independent sources between TV networks and newspapers and between TV and print media were even more significant. Again, television news was much less likely to employ any non-news sources than were the printed media. Less than 3.0 percent of the major party coverage in AP wire reports, for instance, failed to include an independent source of information. Less than 10.0 percent of similar coverage in newspapers (9.8 percent in the Tribune, and 6.6 percent in the Post) failed to include independent sources. But no less than 15.5 percent of the party coverage on CBS, 18.6 percent on ABC, and 23.3 percent on NBC included no citation of independent sources of news.

Questions of partisan bias were not involved in the use of independent sources in news coverage, since both major parties fared in almost the same way. This was true, moreover, of each medium. No significant differences appeared in Republican and Democratic Party and campaign coverage among networks or newspapers in the use of independent sources.

2. Juxtaposition of Sources in Partisan News. Sources of information are often juxtaposed against each other in order to present different aspects of a story and to give news additional color. But the consequences of using multiple sources can be varied, for more than a single source may or may not provide more than a single perspecitve to the news. Information may be presented in a way that either failed to contradict one source or is related to information from an initial source in an ambiguous way.

Whenever two or more sources of information appeared in a news story or AP wire report, the stories were coded according to whether the two most

important sources presented mutually supporting or opposing points of view, or whether clear judgments could not be rendered reliably about the relationship between their points of view. The first was labeled "supporting juxtaposition," and was assumed to enhance the credibility of a source, the second was labeled "opposing juxtaposition," and was assumed to undermine the credibility of a source, and the latter was labeled "neutral juxtaposition," and was assumed to have no concrete implications for a source.

It might be assumed that a great deal of opposing juxtaposition would be present in news coverage of the major parties and campaigns and candidates. At least two sides are presented in partisan campaigns, and news stories might have been expected to reflect this situation. But the modal type of juxtapositioning of sources was "supporting" in network news presentations, and "neutral" in newspaper and AP wire coverage. Juxtapositioning of clearly conflicting sources--"opposing" juxtapositioning of sources--was more likely in TV news than in printed news. It is likely that the conflict in such coverage serves the structural needs of the medium, the needs that stimulate greater audience engagement such as excitement, drama, conflict, and action.

(PLACE TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE)

Candidates. Television networks were less similar than newspapers in the use of sources in candidate stories. McGovern gained more supporting and less opposing juxtaposition in CBS and NBC, although not on ABC. Even clearer differences in the amount of juxtaposition of sources in candidate coverage appeared in news about Nixon. ABC included more supporting (68.9 percent) and less opposing (24.3 percent) juxtaposition than CBS (43.2 percent supporting and 34.7 percent opposing) or NBC (45.6 percent supporting and 36.8 percent opposing). ABC was more supportive of Nixon than the other networks; but the converse (that ABC was less supportive than the other networks of

McGovern) was not clear.

The Post was more likely than the Tribune to include opposing juxtaposition of news sources, and slightly less likely to include neutral juxtaposition. But this was true of stories about each candidate. Both newspapers, moreover, were nearly identical in all other respects. The AP wire reports were more likely to be neutral in coverage of the candidates than the Post, but slightly less likely than the Tribune. AP wire coverage, moreover, included more opposing and slightly less supporting juxtaposition in McGovern coverage.

Parties and Campaigns. Similar kinds of differences in media use of sources appeared in coverage of parties and campaigns as had characterized coverage of candidates: differences among TV networks were greater than among newspapers, and the Democrats gained from coverage on one of the three networks. But it was also clear that these gains were marginal at best and appeared in supporting, but not opposing, juxtaposition. CBS included slightly more supporting juxtaposition of sources in Democratic coverage (55.3 percent) than in GOP coverage (47.6 percent). CBS was also more likely to include opposing juxtaposition in party-campaign coverage than the other networks, but differences were slight. CBS, finally, was more neutral in GOP coverage (17.1 percent) than in Democratic coverage (9.9 percent).

The Tribune and the Post were much more neutral than TV news in party-campaign news, but the Tribune was less likely to include opposing juxtaposition. More opposing juxtaposition was present in GOP news in each newspaper, but differences were again small. The Tribune included more supporting juxtaposition in GOP news while the Post included more supporting juxtaposition in Democratic news. The AP wire coverage was least likely

of the media to include supporting juxtaposition; and wire coverage included slightly less supporting and more opposing juxtaposition in GOP than in Democratic Party-campaign news.

3. Favorable and Unfavorable Coverage. Given minor differences among (but not between) media in the use of particular sources, can specific sources be shown to have favored one side or the other in the campaigns? Were network news reporters more hostile to the candidates than newspaper or wire reporters? In order to answer these questions, percentages of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable coverage were calculated among the coverage provided by the four most frequent sources of partisan news. Sources were included only when they were the most important source in a story for the purposes of this analysis.

Candidate Coverage. Partisan sources were clearly most supportive of their own candidates (Republicans were supportive of Nixon and Democrats of McGovern) and most hostile to the opposition candidate (Republicans of McGovern and Democrats of Nixon). Institutional sources were generally "tilted away" from McGovern, at least where unfavorable material concerning the candidates was concerned.

(PLACE TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE)

The greatest contrasts in coverage were between types of media, although some differences in coverage were also evident among networks and newspapers. Newspapers were much more likely to have included favorable coverage about Nixon and were split in favorable coverage about McGovern. Considering news reporters as sources, for example, TV news gave less favorable coverage of Nixon (4.1 percent on CBS, 7.3 percent on NBC, and 8.1 percent on ABC) than did newspaper reporters (35.9 percent in the Tribune, and 24.7 percent in the Post). TV news also gave less favorable coverage to McGovern than the Post

but more than the Tribune.

When institutional sources are considered, a "tilt away" from McGovern was even more evident in printed than in video media. The printed media also magnified partisan differentiation to a greater extent when Democratic and Republican sources were considered. Democrats were more pro-McGovern and anti-Nixon and the Republicans were more pro-Nixon and anti-McGovern in newspaper coverage and in wire reports than in television news.

Considering news reporters as sources (e.g., sole sources of information), CBS reporters were more favorable in McGovern coverage and less favorable in Nixon coverage. ABC was more favorable in Nixon and less favorable in McGovern coverage. But NBC was most often unfavorable to McGovern, while CBS was least often unfavorable to McGovern. Very little fluctuation among the networks was apparent in unfavorable Nixon coverage.

Tribune and Post news was similar in Nixon coverage, but diverged sharply in McGovern coverage. Tribune news was more likely to include favorable Nixon news (35.9 percent) than was Post news (24.7 percent), although no difference in unfavorable coverage was apparent. But Post coverage was both more critical (20.5 percent) and less critical (25.0 percent) in McGovern coverage than Tribune coverage (12.0 percent and 1.8 percent). AP wire reports were even less likely to be favorable to either candidate than newspaper coverage. But wire reports were also more favorable to Nixon (14.3 percent) than to McGovern (0.0 percent) and less unfavorable to Nixon (3.2 percent) than to McGovern (20.0 percent).

Considering partisan sources, it was difficult to discern whether either candidate held a clear advantage despite the presence of some fluctuations in favorable and unfavorable news. Differences were contradictory and not large in most instances.

Party-Campaign Coverage. Treatment of the major party campaign efforts by news reporters, partisans and institutional sources by most important sources of information paralleled treatment of major party candidates in coverage by these sources. The print media were more likely to include favorable or unfavorable coverage regardless of source. Greater neutrality was generally present in video news. Partisans were also more likely to be most important sources in stories that favored their own campaigns and less likely to be sources in stories that favored the opposition. This trend was strongest in newspaper coverage and weakest in wire coverage. But partisans were consistently less likely to be sources of unfavorable coverage about the opposition's campaign efforts only in the printed media and not on network news coverage. Institutional sources, finally, were more likely to be critical in TV news than in coverage by other media.

(PLACE TABLE 9 ABOUT HERE)

Some contrasts in treatment of the campaigns were present among networks and newspapers, although differences were generally not as large as differences between types of media. Considering news reporters as the most important (e.g., sole) source of information, NBC was most favorable to the GOP, while CBS was most favorable to the Democrats. About nine in ten news stories, however, were neutral on each network. Tribune coverage was both more favorable and unfavorable to the GOP, while Post coverage was more favorable to the GOP and more unfavorable to the Democrats.

Considering Democratic and Republican sources, ABC broadcast the most favorable coverage of Democrats by Democrats and Republicans by Republicans. ABC also broadcast the most unfavorable coverage of Democrats by Republicans and Republicans by Democrats. The Post and Tribune followed similar patterns in their coverage of the campaigns, although the Tribune was slightly more

polarized in coverage; the Tribune included more unfavorable Democratic coverage by Republican sources and more unfavorable Republican coverage by Democratic sources. But these differences were not large.

Considering institutional sources, ABC was much more likely to include news that was unfavorable to the GOP. But ABC was also more likely to include favorable GOP coverage, and all three networks covered the Democrats in similar ways. CBS and NBC treated the Republican campaign in nearly the same fashion. The Post was more likely than the Tribune to carry unfavorable news about the Republican campaign; it was less likely to carry unfavorable news about the Democratic campaign. Campaign news with institutional sources was similar in wire coverage.

It is difficult to conclude that Nixon or McGovern or the Republican or Democratic campaigns gained because of the way news sources were employed in covering the 1972 presidential campaigns. Each gained and each lost advantage in specific instances. But the costs and benefits were too inconsistent to serve as bases for drawing other conclusions. At the same time, structural biases were clearly and consistently apparent in news coverage. Newspapers were less neutral in candidate coverage and party coverage regardless of source. The same was true of wire coverage. Evidently, the printed news included a more polarized series of images of the political world than was clear to the television news viewer.

4. Positional Emphasis. News coverage that is presented early during a television broadcast or on the front page of a newspaper is assumed to have a greater chance of being seen or read than is news that is "buried" toward the end of a television broadcast or on the inside of a newspaper. News judged to be more important is placed in positions that will gain greater exposure, and politicians view such coverage as advantageous to their interests.

Party-campaign and candidate stories were coded according to whether they appeared among the first five stories on each television news program or among news on the first page of a newspaper. Stories that met the criteria had "positional emphasis." AP wire coverage did not appear in this analysis, since positional emphasis is meaningless in the context of wire reporting.

Candidate Coverage. Positional emphasis of Nixon and McGovern was very similar in each medium, although McGovern probably benefitted from greater emphasis in network news, and Nixon probably benefitted in newspaper news. The largest discrepancy in TV news coverage was on ABC. About 49.0 percent of the McGovern coverage appeared among the first five news stories reported during a program, while 37.2 percent of the Nixon coverage received comparable emphasis. Candidate coverage on CBS and NBC was skewed in the same direction, but the discrepancies were much smaller.

(PLACE TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE)

The Tribune and Post treated news about the candidates very differently. Little candidate coverage was displayed on the first page of the Tribune. But the Post included much more candidate coverage on the first page. Nixon received more positional emphasis in each paper, although the differences in positional emphasis between candidates were dwarfed by the apparent differences in policies concerning placing any stories about candidates on the front page of the newspapers.

Party-Campaign Coverage. Patterns of positional emphasis in network and newspaper coverage of the major parties and campaigns mirrored that of candidate coverage. The Democrats did better than the Republicans--they received greater positional emphasis--in television coverage, while the Republicans did better than the Democrats in newspaper coverage.

Some differences in positional emphasis were larger, however, than others.

CBS included 39.9 percent of the GOP stories among the first five in comparison to 52.3 percent of the Democratic stories. Other contrasts, such as differences between positional emphasis of stories on ABC and NBC, were nearly the same as differences in positional emphasis given Nixon and McGovern stories.

The Post was slightly more likely to emphasize Democratic stories than Nixon stories and slightly less likely to emphasize Democratic stories than McGovern stories. But differences in positional emphasis about Nixon and McGovern were not as clear as differences in the ways the newspapers located stories about both parties and campaigns. As was true of candidate coverage, the Tribune was much less likely to include news about parties on the front page.

Partisan Issue Coverage. Political issues comprise a fulcrum about which many electoral battles are waged in American politics. Regardless of the extent to which issues are cognized by mass electorates and regardless of the extent to which voters formulate candidate preferences based on party issue positions, politicians generally behave as if issue differences were indeed crucial to their campaigns. And some issues clearly reflected more favorably on Republicans and other issues on Democrats during the 1972 campaign.

1. General Nature of Issue Coverage. Issues that were reported in conjunction with either candidates, or parties-campaigns, or both were included in this analysis. Issue coverage was coded as favorable when the problem that underlay the issue was being solved, a desired outcome was in sight, or the issue reflected favorably on some basic institution or practice. Issue coverage was coded as unfavorable when the problem as not being solved, a desired outcome was not likely, or the issue reflected unfavorably on some basic institution or practice. Most Watergate coverage would provide examples of

the latter coverage in relation to the GOP campaign, while conclusion of peace in Vietnam would provide an example of the former in relation to the GOP (after the election).

(PLACE TABLE 11 ABOUT HERE)

The addage that bad news drives out good was clearly supported in network news about partisan issues. The same was not true, however, of either newspaper or wire issue coverage. Favorable, neutral, and unfavorable issue coverage on CBS, NBC, and ABC were nearly identical. Two to four percent of the issue stories on each network were favorable; ten to thirteen percent were unfavorable, and the rest were neutral. At the same time, slightly more than one newspaper story in four about campaign or candidate-linked issues was favorable and about one in five was unfavorable. AP wire issue coverage of political issues was nearly evenly balanced. Thus, differences in the way that types of media reported issues during the election were apparent. But these differences only emphasized the extent to which ABC, NBC, and CBS on the one hand, and the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Post on the other, reported different kinds of news.

2. Issue Categories. A set of 12 general issue domains was defined. The set circumscribed most of the news that could be related to the campaign. The categories also proved useful in analysis of popular policy perceptions and important national problems among a cross-section of the American electorate and campaign leaders in another portion of the larger project.

Types of Issues. Not unexpectedly, campaign stories were the most frequently covered issues on TV news and in the newspapers. This may have been partially an artifact of the coding frame, since it was designed to include issues that were associated with either a candidate or a campaign. If anything, the less frequent coverage of campaign affairs in the AP wire reports

was more surprising.

(PLACE TABLE 12 ABOUT HERE)

Vietnam and other foreign affairs dominated TV news, with economic issues and concerns associated with public order running close behind. Each newspaper devoted a much larger proportion of its coverage to governmental functioning. Vietnam, economic issues, and public order matters followed, but less frequently in the press than on television. AP wire coverage of issue stories reflected the distribution of TV news coverage. Vietnam, the economy, and foreign affairs dominated wire reporting that was tied to the campaigns or candidates.

The print media gave roughly the same proportion of attention as TV news to social welfare, natural resources (and agriculture), civil rights, and national defense. Newspapers paid greater attention to labor-management problems and much less attention to (non-Vietnam) foreign affairs than either network news or the AP wire. But these latter differences were small. Print and electronic media differed most in coverage of government, foreign affairs, and the economy; each represented a fairly complex issue area. Substantial agreement, however, among the attention media gave to various issues of the campaign was more apparent.

Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Coverage. As significant as the similarities and differences among the media may have been, a great deal of additional information can be inferred about the character of issue coverage if the favorable and unfavorable complexion is described. Percentages of favorable, neutral, and unfavorable coverage of issues were calculated within each of the 12 issue categories for this analysis.

Newspapers carried a good deal more favorable news about the issue areas than network news on television. The AP wire also carried more favorable issue

news. But these print media also carried more unfavorable news than television programming. The central difference between TV news and printed news appears to have been in the greater neutrality (or ambiguity) of television news stories.

(PLACE TABLE 13 ABOUT HERE)

A striking degree of similarity was apparent in the way CBS, NBC, and ABC covered issue areas. The few discrepancies of significance serve to highlight the similarities. ABC included less neutral coverage in news about natural resources (N=20) than CBS or NBC (N's=32). ABC was less unfavorable in stories about labor-management problems, but the number of stories involved were even fewer during the campaign. ABC was more inclined to include unfavorable civil rights coverage and less inclined to report unfavorable news about government functioning, with CBS a close second in this kind of news. But no favorable news about government functioning was carried on any of the networks.

Thus, it is important to emphasize that the greatest difference in orientation was in the categories of stories that included very low frequencies. And these stories were distributed from July 10, 1972, through November 6, 1972. The more frequent the issue coverage, the more similar the way the networks treated issues.

Larger differences were present in issue coverage between the Tribune and the Post. The Post was generally less favorable and more unfavorable than the Tribune. These differences were particularly significant in coverage of social welfare and civil rights. But it was also true, if of smaller magnitude, in coverage of public order, foreign affairs, and of the two major party campaigns.

Post and Tribune coverage of natural resources, Vietnam, and government

functioning were similar in the frequency of favorable and unfavorable attention devoted to each. It is significant to note that the Post carried more favorable news about defense policy and Vietnam, while it also devoted a larger proportion of neutral coverage to the economy and labor-management issues. AP wire coverage provided a rough parallel to that of the other print media.

It is difficult to conclude from this brief analysis that any set of issues, representing any particular political viewpoint, was supported or opposed in a consistent manner by a particular medium. The neutrality of TV news on nearly all issues suggests its ambiguity in relating to issues, at least in comparison to print media. Certainly, the small differences in treatment of particular issues by CBS, NBC, or ABC, or by the Tribune or Post, in comparison to the extent of inter-media discrepancies offer little succor to those who saw partisan bias in issue coverage.

3. Issue Linkages to Major Party Candidates. The media are reputed to have substantial impact on the formation of initial images, perceptions, and frames of reference about matters of policy. The inertia of existing cognitions may be sidestepped, at least to some extent according to this view, as issues become associated with candidates. Partisan issue coverage was coded in terms of its implications for each of the candidates on the assumption that "bias free" issue coverage may not relate to candidates in a "bias free" way.

Issue coverage was classified as "favorable" whenever it enhanced the image of a candidate by making him appear more effective, correct, successful, or in accord with consensually held social values. Coverage was classified as "unfavorable" whenever it diminished the image of a candidate by making him appear less effective, correct, successful, or as deviant with respect

to social values. Issue coverage that was neither clearly favorable nor unfavorable, and ambiguous coverage were classified as neutral. The implications of six issues for the candidates--Vietnam, the economy, government functioning, public order, social welfare, and national defense--which were discussed in the campaigns and received a fair amount of attention were selected for this analysis.

Differences between television and print media in the style of coverage were replicated in the analysis of specific issue implications for candidates. With regard to Nixon and McGovern, television news coverage of the issues was predominately neutral. Modal newspaper coverage was also neutral, but much more favorable and unfavorable connections between issues and candidates appeared than in the TV coverage. AP wire reports fell between TV news and newspapers in frequency of neutral coverage. It is useful to describe the impact of issue coverage on the candidates as reflected by the manifest content of this news, since the data documented the absence of a systematic tilt in favor of either Nixon or McGovern on television.

Vietnam. It must be recalled that U.S. involvement in Vietnam was winding down rapidly during the autumn of 1972, and that peace appeared "at hand" shortly prior to the election. The significance of the issue was doubtlessly reflected by its frequency of coverage, and the extent to which Vietnam was linked to the campaigns in the mass media. It does not appear that the networks were anti-Nixon or anti-McGovern during the campaign, although substantial differences between the Tribune and Post were present.

In contrast to what might have been expected, Nixon was associated with Vietnam in a more favorable way than McGovern on each network. With the exception of several stories on NBC, Nixon also received less unfavorable coverage than his Democratic opponent. The difference was substantial on

ABC. Nixon received, finally, a great deal more coverage in Vietnam news than McGovern, most likely a reflection of his status as head of state.

Each newspaper was more unfavorable than favorable in linking Vietnam to Nixon. The same was also true of the Tribune's treatment of McGovern in Vietnam coverage. But Nixon received relatively more favorable coverage in the Tribune and McGovern in the Post. The AP wire reports benefitted Nixon more than McGovern on the issue; indeed, wire reports resembled network coverage to a greater extent.

Thus, TV news coverage of Vietnam was favorable to Nixon, and this tendency was greatest on ABC. A Nixon advantage was even stronger in wire coverage, although the strongest case for partisan bias appears to have been in newspaper coverage: the Post was more "pro-McGovern" and the Tribune was more "pro-Nixon" in Vietnam coverage.

The Economy. Economic issues generally benefitted Nixon a bit more than his opponent. CBS was most favorable to Nixon in coverage of economic issues and ABC least favorable among television networks. Each devoted but four stories that were tied to McGovern and that emphasized the economy; one of them was unfavorable and none were favorable.

Both newspapers gave Nixon more favorable than unfavorable coverage in economic news; McGovern received more unfavorable than favorable coverage. But the tendency was stronger in the Tribune than in the Post in these directions. The balance of economic coverage in AP wire reports favored Nixon, but more unfavorable than favorable news about economic issues was linked to each candidate.

(PLACE TABLE 14 ABOUT HERE)

Government Functioning. Nixon was associated with news about government

operations and activities in more stories than McGovern in television news and this coverage was more unfavorable to him. A large proportion of TV news, including some Watergate news, was unfavorable to Nixon (33.3 percent of all such news on ABC and NBC, and 42.4 percent on CBS). About as much favorable as unfavorable coverage of McGovern appeared on each network, although CBS gave McGovern the least favorable coverage.

Newspapers were milder in tone (the one exception in this analysis), although the Tribune was relatively more favorable to Nixon and the Post to McGovern in news about the government. AP wire reports, in contrast, were relatively favorable to McGovern.

Public Order. News about public order--including news about law and order--was more favorable to McGovern on each network, although small numbers of stories were broadcast about the issue. Newspaper coverage was generally unfavorable to both candidates, although both fared slightly better in the Tribune. AP wire reports were also unfavorable to each candidate; again, the balance of coverage was more unfavorable to Nixon.

Social Welfare. TV coverage of the welfare cluster of issues--including health, education, social security, medicine, and others--was unfavorable or neutral in relation to each candidate, except for one story which was tied to McGovern in a favorable way. CBS was most neutral in news coverage. Newspapers were more favorable and McGovern was clearly the beneficiary of this coverage. The Tribune was also substantially more favorable to Nixon than was the Post. AP wire coverage of social welfare was predominately neutral of unfavorable as far as the candidates were concerned. About twice as much unfavorable as favorable wire content was reported about each candidate.

National Defense. Even fewer news stories and wire reports appeared about national defense than the issues already discussed. Indeed, TV news did not

vary substantially in the way the issue was tied to each candidate; content was predominately neutral. The Post was more favorable to Nixon and much more unfavorable to McGovern on the defense issue than the Tribune. AP wire reports mirrored news in the Post in this regard.

Thus, very little news that met criteria established for partisan bias was carried by network news about specific issues. Coverage among the networks was very similar, favoring one candidate or the other on a given issue. Network issue coverage, moreover, was substantially neutral in relation to the candidates. If either benefitted from TV news reporting of the six issues that were singled out for attention, it was Nixon. But coverage was sparse and inconsistent in most cases. Nixon, moreover, clearly appears to have benefitted because of his incumbency; incumbency meant that he actively dealt with many issues as President during the campaign, and the media reported this role as news.

Newspaper coverage also failed to tie issues to candidates in a consistent way. The Tribune did appear to carry issue news that was more favorably linked to Nixon than the Post. The Post also appeared to favor McGovern in issue coverage. But the trends were not consistent on all issues.

Perceptions of Bias in the News

The preceding analysis has suggested that if political bias existed, it was not extremely flagrant in television and newspaper coverage during the 1972 presidential campaign. Structural bias, in contrast, appeared more prominently when network and newspaper coverage of the campaign were compared. Newspapers, for one thing, provided coverage that was much more favorable or unfavorable to the candidates, parties, and issues associated with them; news-

papers were also much less neutral than television news about the same things. It is possible, however, that the perceptions of news content did not perfectly reflect that content. What the public saw may well have been independent of the realities of news coverage to some extent. It is also important to try to assess the significance of the kinds of biases and the ways in which they were perceived among the public.

A national sample of Americans was interviewed shortly before and after the 1972 election concerning media coverage and a variety of other topics about the election. The sample was designed to represent adult citizens 18 years of age or older, and a response rate of 71 percent in the pre-election personal interviews and 70 percent in post-election telephone interviews was attained.[5]

Perceptions of Bias. Respondents were asked in the pre-election interview whether they felt that "...national television news reporting..(had) taken sides." Viewers who said that TV news had taken sides were then questioned about whom the reporting favored or opposed and what specific issues were favored or opposed. A similar series of questions was asked about newspaper coverage in the newspapers that respondents reported having read.

Most Americans did not perceive the news as having taken sides for or against a candidate or an issue. But respondents were somewhat more likely to have perceived bias in newspaper coverage of public affairs. About one respondent in eight (12.2 percent) believed that television news "...took sides" in candidate coverage. In contrast, nearly one in four (24.1 percent) asserted that newspapers had taken sides in reporting about candidates or issues. Perceptions of bias concerning issues or candidates were related; those likely to mention bias in one were more likely to mention bias in the other.

Not only were perceptions of bias more marked in relation to newspaper

coverage, but agreement about which candidate received favorable or unfavorable treatment was also greater in relation to press coverage. Both TV and newspapers were viewed as favoring Nixon more frequently than McGovern and opposing McGovern more frequently than Nixon. But differences in the percentages of the public who saw news favoring or opposing the candidates were greater among newspaper readers than among television news viewers.

(PLACE TABLE 15 ABOUT HERE)

Bias in news coverage was also perceived as symmetrical: those who saw a medium favoring one candidate also saw it opposing the other. About 81.8 percent of those who said TV news favored Nixon also said it opposed McGovern, while 100.0 percent of those who said TV news opposed McGovern said it favored Nixon. About 88.4 percent of those who said TV news favored McGovern also said it opposed Nixon, while 95.0 percent of those who said the news opposed Nixon said it favored McGovern. Roughly the same relationships emerged when perceptions of newspaper coverage were scrutinized.

Perceptions of bias about issues favored and opposed by news coverage on TV were quite similar. Aspects of public policy concerning Vietnam were seen as being favored or opposed by more respondents than any other issue; but nearly the same proportion said the news had given the issue favorable coverage as said that it had given Vietnam unfavorable coverage. The partisan campaigns were the next most frequently mentioned issue on which television news was seen as having taken sides. About 17.8 percent said television had opposed the Democratic campaign, while 10.8 percent said that it had favored the Democratic campaign. In contrast, 12.2 percent said TV news had opposed the GOP campaign, and 11.8 percent said that it had favored the GOP campaign.

(PLACE TABLE 16 ABOUT HERE)

More saw TV news as favoring conservation than opposing it. The same was

true of housing, welfare, labor, busing, law and order, and relations with communist countries, although the number of people mentioning each was too small to be attributed much significance. What is significant is the fact that no one mentioned TV news as either favoring or opposing amnesty, or the issue of honesty in government (despite Watergate coverage) or governmental operations. It is also significant that about equal proportions of the public said that any particular issue had been favored or opposed on the news. No single issue stood out as having had predominately favorable or predominately unfavorable coverage. The bias that was perceived lead to little agreement about its nature. Failure to find clear patterns when issues that television news favored were cross-classified against issues that it was seen as opposing, only reinforces the interpretation.

Bases of Perceptions of Bias in Television News. It is clear that the nature of bias and its perception is in large part in the eye of the beholder. It is useful to describe the kinds of persons who see "bias" in television news programming. It is important to note that among the minority of citizens who perceived bias in candidate and issue coverage, most were integrated into public affairs information systems, and not simply involved in high levels of exposure to general TV fare. Involvement in an information dissemination network and interest in and knowledge about public affairs provided two key bases leading to perceptions of bias in campaign coverage.

(PLACE TABLE 17 ABOUT HERE)

Respondents who watched the least general TV programming were most likely to report bias in news. About 27.0 percent of the light and 19.1 percent of the heavy general fare viewers reported bias about issues, and 16.7 percent of the light and 11.8 percent of the heavy viewers reported bias about candidates. In contrast, the regular viewers of news programming were more likely

to mention bias about both candidate and issue coverage than were the less regular news fans. But the specific network that respondents reported watching made nearly no difference in the tendency to report biased coverage. This, of course, is a view that the content analysis supported: perceptions of political bias in news coverage are a function of what the perceiver brought to the viewing situation rather than what the manifest content of TV broadcasts suggested.

It was also apparent that those who were highly informed about the election (who could mention the vice-presidential and congressional candidates in their district) were considerably more likely to mention bias in candidate and issue coverage. Contrasts among the politically involved and uninvolved were even sharper. About 21.8 percent of the involved and 8.7 percent of the uninvolved said news was biased about candidates, while 28.9 percent of the involved and 18.3 percent of the uninvolved said news was biased about issues.

Partisanship was also related to perceptions of bias in TV news coverage, but the relationship was not the same for issue and candidate perceptions. Republicans and independents were much more likely than Democrats to assert that news had taken sides about issues. But differences in perceptions of candidate bias were almost non-existent. About one in eight Democrats, independents, and Republicans said they thought network news had taken sides for or against one of the candidates.

Partisan Choice and Perceived Bias. Party identification may not have influenced perceptions of biased news coverage about candidates, but partisanship did affect perceptions of which candidate a medium was seen as having favored or opposed. Democrats saw the news as favoring Nixon, while Republicans saw the news as favoring McGovern. Conversely, Democrats saw TV news as opposing McGovern, while Republicans saw TV news as opposing Nixon. Dif-

ferences among percentages were relatively small. A compensatory character was apparent: normally preferred candidates were perceived as being short-changed by TV news coverage.

(PLACE TABLE 18 ABOUT HERE)

The differences become all the more significant, however, when compared with perceptions of bias in newspaper coverage. Exactly the reverse pattern was apparent in perceptions of newspaper coverage: Republicans saw the press as favoring Nixon and opposing McGovern, while Democrats saw the press as favoring McGovern and opposing Nixon. Differences in percentages between Democrats and Republicans were also somewhat larger. The findings replicate Robinson's findings for the 1968 election (1972: 239-246), although it is not clear that a "protest" is represented by television viewers.

The effects of perceived bias were also apparent in pre-election candidate preference. Perception of television news favoring McGovern was associated with increased preference for Nixon among all partisan groups: but perception of television news opposing Nixon was associated with increased preference for Nixon. Among Democrats, 23.5 percent of those who saw TV news favoring Nixon in comparison to 45.5 percent who saw TV news favoring McGovern indicated a Nixon preference; and, among Republicans, 81.8 percent of those who saw TV news favoring Nixon in comparison to 87.5 percent of those who saw TV news favoring McGovern indicated a Nixon preference.

The same trend held among independents. On the other hand, among Democrats, 31.3 percent of those who saw TV news opposing Nixon and 17.8 percent of those who saw TV news opposing McGovern indicated a Nixon preference. About 87.5 percent of the Republicans who saw the news opposing McGovern indicated a Nixon preference. Among independents, fewer who saw the news opposing McGovern than who saw it opposing Nixon indicated a preference for

Nixon.

(PLACE TABLE 19 ABOUT HERE)

When percentages of those who indicated post-election preferences or reported votes were scrutinized, a roughly similar pattern emerged with one exception. Republicans' post-election preferences were more in line with the direction of perceived television news bias than were their pre-election preferences: Republicans who saw TV news favoring Nixon were more likely than other Republicans to report having supported him, while Republicans who saw TV news opposing Nixon were a bit less likely to report having supported him than were Republicans who saw the news opposing McGovern. The differences were small and were based on small numbers of cases, but were nonetheless significant since they disrupted the previously established pattern.

Pre- and post-election Nixon support among partisans who perceived bias in newspaper coverage followed the patterns of Nixon support among partisans who saw bias in TV news coverage. But several exceptions were evident. In the pre-election preferences, Democrats who saw newspapers as favoring McGovern and as opposing Nixon indicated Nixon preferences to a greater extent than others. Republicans and independents indicated preferences that were in accord with the direction of perceived bias: those who saw the press favoring Nixon and opposing McGovern indicated an increased Nixon preference, and those who saw the press favoring McGovern and opposing Nixon indicated a decreased Nixon preference. But Republicans who saw the newspaper they read as favoring McGovern were slightly more likely than other Republicans to favor Nixon, and Democrats who saw the press as opposing Nixon were more likely to favor Nixon than were other Democrats.

Thus, perceptions of television news and press bias did not necessarily work for or against a candidate. Among Democrats, perceptions of bias tended

to work against McGovern's opponent. Among Republicans, support for Nixon was less clearly related to perceptions of television and press bias. But perceived bias in favor of McGovern and in opposition to Nixon (in the pre-election phase at least) were associated with increased support for Nixon.

Perceived Bias and Cognitions about News. Perceptions of "bias" might also be expected to influence views about the media themselves. Messengers who arrive with unwelcome messages might be expected to be less than welcome. Citizens who saw media favoring their party's candidate, for instance, might be expected to harbor more favorable views about the media than citizens who saw media opposing their party's candidate.

Expressions of "liking TV newspeople" were associated with perceptions that network news favored or opposed the candidate of one's own party. About 54.5 percent of the Republicans who saw TV news favoring Nixon, for example, said they liked TV newspeople. In contrast, only 12.5 percent of the Republicans who saw TV news as favoring McGovern gave similar responses. On the other hand, 12.5 percent of the Republicans who said TV news opposed McGovern said they liked TV newspeople. Differences among independents in this regard followed those among Republicans, although differences among Democrats were very small.

(PLACE TABLE 20 ABOUT HERE)

All three sets of partisans who viewed TV news as favoring Nixon and opposing McGovern tended to regard television news as the most credible of the mass media. The relationships between perceptions of bias and credibility, however, were much stronger among Republicans than among either Democrats or independents. Conversely, Democrats and Republicans who viewed TV news as favoring McGovern and opposing Nixon tended to rate TV news as the least credible of the mass media. These relationships were strongest among Democrats;

but none of the relationships were as strong as those involving attributions of high credibility to television.

Those in each partisan group who saw TV news favoring McGovern and opposing Nixon were more likely to agree with the assertion that "newspeople cannot be trusted." But the effect of partisanship was also apparent in these data. Differences in levels of distrust directed toward TV newspeople were greater among Republicans than among Democrats, although differences among independents were even greater than those among Republicans.

Most Americans did not agree that TV news was "prejudiced." Yet Democrats who saw TV news as favoring Nixon or opposing McGovern were more likely to hold this view than were others. Republicans who believed that TV news favored McGovern and opposed Nixon were more likely than others to assert that TV news was "prejudiced." But some of those who saw no bias in the news also viewed TV news as prejudiced, and many who saw TV news as biased did not say that it was prejudiced.

Generally speaking, Republicans tended to view TV newspeople more favorably, attribute greater credibility to TV news, expressed trust in newspeople, and avoided saying that the news was prejudiced when network news was seen as having favored Nixon and opposed McGovern. The same was not consistently true of Democrats; it is possible that the large numbers of Democrats who refused to support the McGovern candidacy in 1972 created considerable ambivalence and distorted the relationship between perceptions of bias and attitudes about news.

It is also important to note that substantial proportions of those who saw TV news as biased--as favoring or opposing one candidate or the other--can be characterized by all of the attributes of each attitude. Thus, it is evident that perceptions of bias cannot be translated simply into terms of pre-

judice, distrust, low (or high) credibility, or dislike. The notion of "biased news" simply does not mean the same thing to many among the general public and the polemicists who decry "bias in the media."

Discussion

This study analyzed the relationship between manifest content of television news programming and popular perceptions of the programming in an attempt to assess the nature and impact of political bias in news coverage. Three types of media were included in the study in order to assess the amount of partisan bias present in network news coverage of the 1972 election campaign and to try to disentangle partisan bias from structural and situation forms of bias.

Structural bias was clearly evident in much of the analysis. Television covered the 1972 campaign differently than the press, and newspapers differed somewhat from AP wire reports. It is also probable that situational factors were related to the ways in which the campaign was covered, although a longitudinal design would be required to support conclusions about situational bias with confidence. The Democrats nominated a candidate who was widely viewed as disagreeing with much of the regular democratic constituency on a series of issues, his campaign suffered from a series of mishaps many of which found their way into the news, and an impression of great indecisiveness and confusion was evident in news during the campaign. In contrast, the GOP ran an incumbent with a credible record who chose to relegate many of his campaign activities to others, and to avoid public appearances in unstructured situations.[6]

Using a residual view of partisan bias--bias occurs when the same kind of media cover the same type of event in different ways--little basis for asserting partisan bias was present in television network coverage of the campaign.

Each candidate benefitted to some extent from different aspects of news coverage on each medium. McGovern and the Democratic Party-campaign received more coverage than Nixon and the GOP. But this was true on each network. ABC was slightly more likely than the other networks to provide more coverage about McGovern and the Democrats. Nixon received more coverage in the press, although the Tribune gave the Democrats more coverage than the Republicans, and the Post gave the Republicans more coverage than the Democrats. And if Nixon received less coverage than his opponent, Nixon's coverage was more favorable. But none of the networks were clearly and consistently less favorable to Nixon or McGovern on balance than were the others.

Each candidate benefitted from the way sources of news were handled. Each party-campaign was most likely to provide information about its own campaign: this information was generally very favorable. Nixon coverage was least likely to include independent sources, and this was slightly more likely in ABC and NBC coverage. Very little opposing juxtapositioning of news sources appeared, although ABC was very slightly likely to include more supporting and less opposing juxtaposition of sources in Nixon coverage than in McGovern coverage. But use of sources gave neither candidate or party-campaign anything other than a marginal advantage at most. By and large sources of newspaper news were more favorable to Nixon than to his opponent, and the Post was less favorable and the Tribune relatively more favorable to Nixon. But even here exceptions were apparent. Stories without independent sources carried in the Post were more favorable to the GOP and more unfavorable to the Democrats than comparable coverage in the Tribune. And NBC reporters were more favorable to the GOP, while CBS reporters were more favorable to the Democrats. No clear gains for either side were apparent in the aggregate. Losses and gains depended on the specifics of coverage, were inconsistent, and were based on very small numbers

of stories.

McGovern had some advantage in terms of positional emphasis--placement early in a news broadcast or on the front page of a newspaper--and the advantage was greatest on ABC. Nixon had an advantage in positional emphasis in the printed media. The advantages and disadvantages of party-campaign coverage paralleled those of the respective candidates.

No clear evidence for political bias in issue coverage was apparent in the analysis. The networks were very similar in coverage of issues in each aspect of coverage. Issue coverage differed among networks in inverse proportion to the frequency of stories about the issue. Some differences in which issues received attention did appear between media.

If either candidate gained from issue coverage during the 1972 election, it was Nixon. Vietnam, the economy, governmental operation, public order, social welfare, and national defense coverage was analyzed in terms of advantages to either candidate. Nixon was more likely to have been linked favorably to many of these issues than his opponent, although the pattern of favorable and unfavorable linkages varied considerably by network and newspaper on different issues. But the advantage could not be attributed to partisan bias in coverage. It did appear, however, that the Post was somewhat tilted toward McGovern and the Tribune toward Nixon in linking of the six issues to each candidate. Again, differences were not large, and some inconsistencies appeared.

Structural biases were much more evident. The amount and nature of coverage varied considerably by medium. TV news was markedly more likely to be neutral, while newspaper coverage was more likely to be favorable or unfavorable about each candidate and party-campaign. The newspapers were more likely to use independent sources of information, and none of the media were likely to include much opposing juxtaposition of news sources. The printed media were

also more likely than television news to include favorable and unfavorable coverage of the parties. In terms of emphasis, Democrats appeared earlier in news more often than the Republicans on TV news, while the Republicans appeared more frequently on the first page of the printed media.

Issues were covered differently on television and in newspapers. More unfavorable than favorable coverage was given partisan issues on television, while the reverse was true in newspaper coverage. The newspapers, as in candidate and party-campaign coverage, were less likely to devote neutral coverage to issues.

Thus, it was apparent that little partisan but a fair amount of structural bias was present in news coverage. Survey data also suggested that partisan bias was more likely to have been perceived than the content analysis data about partisan bias might suggest was warranted. But the meaning and impact of perceptions of bias were far from clear. Although most Americans did not see the media as biased. TV news and newspapers were seen as favoring Nixon and opposing McGovern in the election by those who did see biased coverage. Newspapers were viewed as more biased than television news, although perceptions of bias in each medium were related. Those who saw one medium as biased were more likely to see the other medium as biased as well. Bias was also perceived to be symmetrical: if TV news was seen as favoring one candidate, then it was also likely to be seen as opposing the opposition.

More bias was perceived in Vietnam coverage than any other issue, but about the same proportions saw the coverage favoring or opposing some aspect of Vietnam. Perceptions of campaign coverage were similar, although the Democrats were slightly less likely to be seen as having an advantage in news coverage. No perceptions of bias at all were reported in coverage of some controversial issues of the campaign: amnesty, honesty in government, oper-

ations of government. No single issue, moreover, was seen as being treated in an unequivocally favorable or unfavorable way by TV news. Rather, a remarkable "balance" in the proportions that perceived an issue as having unfavorable or favorable coverage was apparent. Indeed, these data suggest that there was little agreement about the parameters of the bias that was perceived.

Bias was also more likely to be seen by those sensitive to it, those who followed public affairs reporting on television and in newspapers, the politically involved, and those knowledgable about politics. Those who watched TV programming of a general sort were no more likely to "see bias" than those who watched little such programming. Republicans were a bit more likely to perceive biased issue coverage, although neither set of partisans were more likely to perceive bias in candidate coverage.

Partisan sentiment, did, however, interact with the kind of bias seen in candidate coverage in TV news. Democrats tended to see news favoring Nixon and opposing McGovern and Republicans tended to see the converse. A compensatory model in which the opposition benefits from forces beyond one's own control (news policy and content) appears to be at work. But the model is not general. Perceptions of bias in newspaper coverage of candidates follows exactly the opposite pattern. Each set of partisans saw their own candidate benefitted by newspaper coverage. Thus, it may be that partisans in 1972, no less than in 1968 (Robinson, 1972), approached each medium with a different mental set.

Perceptions of biased TV news coverage had a variety of effects on voting behavior and attitudes about the medium. Perceptions of bias about either candidate lead to increased preference for Nixon among both Democrats and Republicans; but perceptions of bias in newspapers enhanced McGovern's sup-

port among Democrats but not Republicans. Thus, perceptions of bias may have benefitted Nixon somewhat, but other factors were clearly at work, since differences in the nature and strength of relationships by medium and partisanship were at work. Perceptions of bias in favor of one's party candidate were associated with liking and credibility of television (with a few exceptions). Bias in favor of the opposition was, in contrast, associated with distrust of TV newsmen and perceptions of prejudice among TV news people. Distrust of newsmen was somewhat more common among Republicans than among Democrats.

Thus, bias was clearly present in television and press coverage of the 1972 election. But analysis suggests that this bias was a result of structural and situational factors associated with the media and the election rather than a result of political calculations among news personnel. Perceptions of bias were scattered among the electorate. It would appear that the perceptions of bias were largely in the eye of the beholder because they were more closely related to political characteristics of individuals than to observations that might have stemmed from television news. A partisan tilt was present; Republicans were more likely than Democrats to view bias in issue coverage during the campaign but, even in this instance, the same was not true of candidate coverage.

The kinds of bias that were clear in network news programming during the 1972 campaign undoubtedly had political consequences, and these consequences probably favored Nixon more than McGovern. But assertions of political bias are probably less significant in rectifying imbalances in television news than basic changes in the incentive systems, operating procedures, and styles of campaigning in American Presidential elections. Reforms, especially reforms geared to providing more useful information and less emotively laden

imagery, should be cast in this light rather than in polemical terms. Research about the evaluations citizens have of news and the content of the news is clearly warranted. Significant variations in evaluations of bias exist, but it is not clear what the dynamics of the relationships are.

Table 1. Frequency and Amount of News Coverage of Candidates, Parties, and Partisan Issues by Medium

	Network News					
	CBS		NBC		ABC	
Emphasis[a]:	N	Time[b]	N	Time[b]	N	Time[b]
Candidate	4.8%	2.8%	6.6%	3.2%	4.4%	2.5%
Party	6.1	3.8	8.6	8.2	6.2	4.8
Candidate & Issue	17.7	12.3	15.0	13.8	16.1	13.4
Candidate & Party	24.3	26.4	23.4	22.5	28.1	30.2
Party & Issue	13.2	14.7	14.1	12.7	14.0	13.2
All three	33.9	40.0	32.3	39.6	31.3	35.9
Total	(560)	14.8	(526)	13.2	(566)	14.0

	Newspaper					
	Chicago Tribune		Washington Post		AP Wire	
	N	Length[c]	N	Length[c]	N	Length[d]
Candidate	0.8%	0.5%	1.4%	0.6%	5.8%	2.4%
Party	1.7	1.0	2.0	0.5	2.9	2.3
Candidate & Issue	11.2	9.9	12.4	7.6	26.1	23.7
Candidate & Party	10.1	8.0	8.7	7.0	10.0	6.6
Party & Issue	4.8	3.3	3.0	2.0	8.1	7.2
All three	71.3	77.2	72.5	82.3	47.0	57.8
Total	(903)	12,421	(1178)	20,671	(1760)	29,488

[a]Emphasis was defined in terms of amount and priority of attention paid to candidates, parties or campaign activities, and issues in the context of a story. Stories that failed to emphasize either a party or a candidate were omitted from the analysis.

[b]Time was measured in seconds, but the network totals are presented in hours.

[c]Length is measured as column inches measured from microfilm copy.

[d]Length is measured as inches of AP Wire text from a teletype devoted to and event or topic within the daywire or night wire coverage.

Table 2. Frequency and Amount of Nixon and McGovern, and Democratic and Republican Party Coverage by Medium.[a]

	Network News					
	CBS		NBC		ABC	
Candidates:	N	Time	N	Time	N	Time
Nixon	47.1%	45.1%	48.6%	45.0%	42.8%	39.0%
McGovern	52.9	54.9	51.4	55.0	57.2	61.0
Total	(374)	9.54	(317)	8.17	(346)	8.59
Party:						
Republican	44.9%	44.9%	45.8%	43.5%	37.4%	34.6%
Democratic	55.1	55.1	54.2	56.5	62.6	65.4
Total	(430)	12.47	(406)	10.83	(446)	11.73

	Newspaper					
	Chicago Tribune		Washington Post		AP Wire	
Candidates:	N	Length	N	Length	N	Length
Nixon	57.7%	54.6%	61.4%	61.8%	57.2%	54.2%
McGovern	42.3	45.4	38.6	38.2	42.8	45.8
Total	(804)	11,385	(1084)	19,948	(1273)	21,750
Party:						
Republican	49.2%	47.4%	54.6%	58.2%	46.8%	47.2%
Democratic	50.8	52.6	45.4	41.8	53.2	52.8
Total	(788)	11,090	(1003)	18,968	(1179)	21,611

[a]See notes for Table 1. Coverage is defined by candidate or party-campaign prominence. Nixon stories give relatively greater emphasis, for instance, to Nixon even if McGovern were also mentioned in a story. Candidate and party-campaign stories were coded independently so that they did not necessarily comprise mutually exclusive classes.

Table 3. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Television, Newspaper, and Wire Stories about Nixon and McGovern in Stories that Emphasize the Respective Candidates by Candidate, Medium, Frequency, and Amount of Coverage.[a]

		Nixon				McGovern			
Network News:		Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
CBS:	Frequency	16.2%	73.8%	10.0%	(130)	9.0%	76.2%	14.8%	(122)
	Time	14.3	74.4	11.3	(192.8)	9.6	76.2	14.2	(196.8)
NBC:	Frequency	15.2	78.1	6.7	(105)	19.8	68.8	11.5	(96)
	Time	15.6	77.2	7.3	(171.6)	21.8	66.9	11.3	(160.8)
ABC:	Frequency	19.1	72.3	8.5	(94)	9.8	73.0	17.2	(122)
	Time	20.7	65.7	13.6	(134.6)	14.2	67.4	18.4	(190.3)
Newspapers:									
Tribune:									
	Frequency	30.3	46.8	23.0	(631)	27.0	44.5	28.5	(512)
	Length	31.7	44.5	23.7	(8810)	28.2	43.7	28.1	(7788)
Post:	Frequency	27.2	50.0	22.7	(866)	25.1	50.0	24.8	(649)
	Length	26.3	51.8	21.9	(16,101)	23.8	53.2	23.0	(12,330)
AP Wire:									
	Frequency	19.0	64.1	16.9	(599)	16.4	67.0	16.6	(457)
	Length	20.0	62.8	17.2	(10,681)	15.3	72.2	12.5	(8961)

[a]See notes for Table 2. Favorable stories included material that emphasized the positive aspects of a candidate or campaign, including such aspects as winning, gaining strength, being intelligent, etc. Unfavorable stories included material that emphasized negative aspects of a candidate or campaign, including such aspects as losing, failing, diminishing in strength, being stupid or silly, etc. Stories were classified as neutral whenever they could not be clearly assigned to favorable or unfavorable classifications due to a balanced or ambiguous presentation of traits.

Table 4. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Television, Newspaper, and AP Wire News Stories about the Democratic and Republican Parties and Campaigns in Stories that Emphasize the Respective Parties by Party, Medium, Frequency, and Amount of Coverage.

	Republicans				Democrats			
Network News:	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	(N)	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	(N)
CBS: Frequency	19.3%	73.1%	7.6%	(119)	14.7%	70.1%	15.2%	(204)
Time	17.0	75.4	7.6	(215.4)	16.6	66.3	17.1	(367.6)
NBC: Frequency	26.8	64.8	8.3	(108)	15.1	74.0	10.8	(185)
Time	34.6	54.5	10.9	(168.6)	16.5	73.0	10.5	(324.9)
ABC: Frequency	21.4	74.5	4.1	(98)	13.1	69.9	17.0	(236)
Time	21.4	73.6	5.0	(140.5)	15.4	66.8	17.8	(408.8)
Newspapers:								
Tribune:								
Frequency	36.6	47.2	16.2	(464)	35.9	43.2	20.9	(340)
Time	39.5	44.1	16.4	(6215)	38.3	41.6	20.0	(5170)
Post:								
Frequency	31.9	50.1	18.0	(665)	34.7	47.4	17.9	(418)
Time	31.2	52.1	16.7	(12,282)	35.2	48.4	16.5	(7624)
AP Wire:								
Frequency	9.0	68.8	22.2	(410)	7.6	85.9	6.5	(448)
Time	10.3	68.9	20.7	(8,335)	7.4	87.2	5.4	(8957)

[a]See notes for Table 3.

Table 5. Sources of Nixon and McGovern Coverage by Candidate and Medium.[a]

	Television News					
	CBS		NBC		ABC	
	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern
Reporter	13.2%	10.5%	17.2%	12.4%	18.3%	15.2%
Rep	27.7	19.2	26.9	15.2	22.7	14.7
Dems	16.9	45.7	18.8	52.2	18.3	46.0
Inst	23.7	9.6	22.2	6.7	21.5	10.7
Int Grp	7.5	9.1	5.3	8.4	8.6	8.9
For	5.9	0.9	3.1	0.6	6.8	1.3
Expert	5.1	5.0	6.6	4.5	3.8	3.1
Totals	(372)	(219)	(320)	(178)	(339)	(224)

	Newspaper					
	Chicago Tribune		Washington Post		AP Wire	
	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern	Nixon	McGovern
Reporter	13.2%	10.1%	9.8%	7.2%	4.8%	2.6%
Rep	32.4	17.9	29.0	18.2	27.7	23.7
Dems	23.1	47.5	24.8	45.4	26.9	45.3
Inst	13.1	5.0	12.8	5.5	16.8	7.5
Int Grp	7.6	10.3	9.4	9.3	4.9	5.4
For	2.5	1.6	2.2	2.4	5.0	2.0
Expert	8.0	7.6	12.1	11.9	13.9	13.6
Totals	(589)	(497)	(787)	(614)	(1301)	(782)

[a]Sources are based on a general classification of the most frequently encountered politically relevant sources in news material during the campaign. The most important sources was coded for each story. Although news reporters were coded only when no other sources was present. See notes to preceeding tables. Percentages are based on frequencies.

Table 6. Sources of Republican and Democratic Coverage by Party and Medium.[a]

	Television News					
	CBS		NBC		ABC	
	Republican	Democratic	Republican	Democratic	Republican	Democratic
Reporter	15.5%	15.8%	23.3%	23.4%	18.6%	18.8%
Rep	26.7	27.1	23.5	23.7	21.4	21.6
Dem	38.4	38.1	36.0	35.5	40.9	40.9
Inst	9.4	9.4	9.0	9.1	3.0	9.4
Int Grp	6.3	6.0	4.0	4.0	8.6	5.0
For	0.2	.2	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0
Experts	3.5	3.4	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.1
Totals	(427)	(417)	(400)	(397)	(440)	(435)

	Newspapers					
	Chicago Tribune		Washington Post		AP Wire	
	Republican	Democratic	Republican	Democratic	Republican	Democratic
Reporter	9.8%	9.8%	6.6%	8.0%	2.3%	2.4%
Rep	37.5	17.9	34.3	19.4	37.3	20.3
Dem	23.0	47.1	24.3	44.4	26.6	48.3
Inst	12.0	7.6	11.7	8.2	12.5	9.9
Int Grp	8.3	9.0	9.1	7.5	6.9	4.7
For	2.0	1.7	2.3	2.5	1.2	1.0
Experts	7.5	6.9	11.7	10.0	13.1	13.4
Totals	(509)	(580)	(683)	(721)	(662)	(696)

[a]See notes for Table 5. Percentages are based on frequencies.

Table 7. Supporting, Neutral, and Opposing Juxtepositioning of Sources by Medium, Candidate, and Party.[a]

		Candidates[b]				Party[c]			
		Supporting	Neutral	Opposing	Total	Supporting	Neutral	Opposing	Total
Television:									
CBS:	R/N	43.2%	22.1%	34.7%	(95)	47.6%	17.1%	35.2%	(105)
	D/M	59.0	11.1	29.9	(117)	55.3	9.9	34.8	(141)
NBC:	R/N	45.6	17.6	36.8	(68)	59.3	13.6	27.2	(81)
	D/M	54.1	12.9	32.9	(85)	60.0	10.8	29.2	(120)
ABC:	R/N	68.9	6.8	24.3	(74)	56.0	14.3	29.8	(84)
	D/M	58.2	13.6	28.2	(110)	58.2	12.1	29.7	(165)
Newspapers:									
Tribune:									
	R/N	30.2	55.6	14.2	(381)	31.9	53.3	14.8	(332)
	D/M	27.2	59.5	13.3	(301)	25.6	61.7	12.7	(355)
Post:	R/N	28.8	48.3	22.9	(576)	29.7	45.0	25.3	(498)
	D/M	31.5	45.7	22.8	(381)	31.1	47.9	21.0	(405)
AP Wire:									
	R/N	23.5	58.4	18.1	(668)	21.4	54.8	23.8	(513)
	D/M	22.6	51.7	25.7	(522)	22.2	58.9	18.8	(589)

[a]Figures are percentages of relevant stories. The proportions of amount of coverage parallel these proportions of frequency, and are not presented for the sake of space. See notes for preceeding tables. Percentages are based on frequencies.

[b]Nixon is coded "N", and McGovern as "M".

[c]Democrats are labeled "D", and Republicans "R".

Table 8. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Candidate Coverage by Candidate, Medium, and Selected Sources.[a]

	Nixon				McGovern			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	N	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	N
Television:								
CBS:								
Reporter	4.1%	85.7%	10.2%	(49)	13.0%	87.0%	0.0%	(23)
Rep	15.5	74.8	9.7	(103)	2.8	52.0	45.2	(42)
Dems	3.2	41.3	55.6	(63)	9.0	81.0	10.0	(100)
Inst	9.1	75.0	15.9	(88)	9.5	66.7	23.8	(21)
NBC:								
Reporter	7.3	85.5	7.3	(55)	9.1	68.2	22.7	(22)
Rep	16.3	75.6	8.1	(86)	0.0	59.3	40.7	(27)
Dems	5.0	45.0	50.0	(60)	20.4	68.8	10.8	(93)
Inst	4.2	78.9	16.9	(71)	16.7	75.0	8.3	(12)
ABC:								
Reporter	8.1	82.3	9.7	(62)	2.9	85.3	11.8	(34)
Rep	18.2	71.4	10.4	(77)	6.1	57.6	36.4	(33)
Dems	3.2	38.7	58.1	(62)	13.6	79.6	6.8	(103)
Inst	5.5	79.5	15.1	(73)	0.0	70.8	29.2	(24)
Newspapers:								
Tribune:								
Reporter	35.9	59.0	5.1	(78)	1.8	70.0	12.0	(50)
Rep	40.8	53.4	5.8	(191)	1.1	30.3	68.5	(89)
Dems	14.0	27.9	58.1	(136)	40.3	47.5	12.3	(236)
Inst	29.9	59.7	10.4	(77)	0.0	44.0	56.0	(25)
Post:								
Reporter	24.7	70.1	5.2	(77)	25.0	54.5	20.5	(44)
Rep	42.1	51.3	6.6	(228)	2.7	45.5	51.8	(112)
Dems	10.3	37.9	51.8	(195)	41.2	47.3	11.5	(279)
Inst	25.7	65.3	8.9	(101)	0.0	50.0	50.0	(34)
AP Wire:								
Reporter	14.3	82.5	3.2	(63)	0.0	80.0	20.0	(20)
Rep	21.7	71.1	7.2	(360)	1.1	61.6	37.3	(185)
Dems	3.7	46.3	50.0	(350)	19.8	74.9	5.4	(354)
Inst	15.6	75.2	9.2	(218)	1.7	62.7	35.6	(59)

[a]See notes for preceeding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies.

Table 9. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Party - Campaign Coverage by Party, Medium, and Selected Sources.[a]

	Republicans				Democrats			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	N	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	N
Television:								
CBS: Reporter	4.5%	86.4%	9.1%	(66)	3.0%	93.9%	3.0%	(66)
Rep	13.2	76.3	10.5	(114)	1.8	84.1	14.2	(113)
Dems	4.9	84.8	10.4	(164)	10.7	74.2	15.1	(159)
Inst.	0.0	75.0	25.0	(40)	2.6	89.7	7.7	(39)
NBC: Reporter	5.4	92.5	2.2	(93)	0.0	90.3	9.7	(93)
Rep	18.1	71.3	10.6	(94)	1.1	87.2	11.7	(94)
Dems	2.8	87.5	9.7	(144)	11.3	79.4	9.2	(141)
Inst.	0.0	72.2	27.8	(36)	0.0	91.7	8.3	(36)
ABC: Reporter	3.7	89.0	7.3	(82)	1.2	87.8	11.0	(82)
Rep	23.4	64.9	11.7	(94)	0.0	78.7	21.3	(94)
Dems	2.8	85.6	11.7	(180)	13.4	77.0	9.6	(178)
Inst.	15.4	23.1	61.5	(13)	2.4	90.2	7.3	(41)
Newspapers:								
Tribune:								
Reporter	18.0	72.0	10.0	(50)	7.0	87.7	5.3	(57)
Rep	26.2	67.5	6.3	(191)	3.8	73.1	23.1	(104)
Dems	0.9	55.6	43.6	(117)	24.5	68.9	6.6	(273)
Inst.	4.9	85.2	9.8	(61)	2.3	81.8	15.9	(44)
Post:								
Reporter	13.3	84.4	2.2	(45)	5.2	84.5	10.3	(58)
Rep	25.2	65.0	9.8	(234)	2.1	78.6	19.3	(140)
Dems	4.8	59.0	36.1	(166)	26.6	64.7	8.8	(320)
Inst.	3.8	78.8	17.5	(80)	0.0	96.6	3.4	(59)
AP Wire:								
Reporter	6.7	73.3	20.0	(15)	0.0	100.0	0.0	(17)
Rep	10.5	79.4	10.1	(247)	1.4	80.1	18.4	(141)
Dems	1.7	67.6	30.7	(176)	6.3	92.0	1.8	(336)
Inst.	8.4	72.3	19.3	(83)	3.3	84.1	13.0	(69)

[a]See notes for preceeding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies.

Table 10. Positional Emphasis of News Stories by Candidate, Party and Medium.[a]

	Candidate[b]			Party[c]	
Television:	High	Total		High	Total
CBS:					
Nixon	44.3%	176	Republicans	39.9%	193
McGovern	49.0	198	Democrats	52.3	237
NBC:					
Nixon	41.6	154	Republicans	37.6	186
McGovern	44.2	163	Democrats	40.9	220
ABC:					
Nixon	37.2	148	Republicans	37.7	167
McGovern	49.0	198	Democrats	49.8	279
Newspapers:					
Tribune:					
Nixon	3.9	464	Republicans	3.4	388
McGovern	1.2	340	Democrats	1.0	400
Post:					
Nixon	23.1	666	Republicans	25.2	548
McGovern	17.0	418	Democrats	16.3	455

[a]Percentages are based on frequencies and represent placement of stories in each medium in a location that facilitates high exposure (among the first five stories on TV news, and location on the front page in newspapers).

[b]Percentages based on the total number of stories emphasizing each candidate.

[c]Percentages based on the total number of stories emphasizing each party.

Table 11. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Issue Coverage by Medium.[a]

	News Coverage			
Television News:	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Totals
CBS	2.7%	86.5%	10.7%	921
NBC	3.7	85.2	11.1	995
ABC	3.8	83.8	12.5	899
Newspapers:				
Tribune	28.9	51.9	19.2	792
Post	25.4	52.6	22.0	1043
AP Wire:	23.1	54.9	22.0	4129

[a]See notes to preceeding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies. Favorable coverage is news that emphasized successful handling of a problem, progress in working on a problem, a desired outcome being attained, or an issue reflecting favorably on an institution. Unfavorable coverage is news that stressed the opposite: unsuccessful handling of a problem, failure or deterioration of work on a problem, an undesired outcome being attained, or an issue reflecting unfavorably on an institution. Coverage that could not be classified clearly as predominantly emphasizing either, was classified as neutral.

Table 12. Issues Associated with the Campaign by Medium and Type of Medium.[a]

	Television			Newspapers		
Policy Issues	CBS	NBC	ABC	Tribune	Post	AP Wire
Social Welfare	2.7%	2.4%	2.8%	4.5%	3.9%	5.8%
Natural Resources	2.9	2.5	1.8	1.6	2.5	2.6
Labor-Mgt.	1.0	1.2	1.2	3.7	3.1	1.9
Civil Rights	2.4	2.3	1.9	1.7	3.0	4.9
Public Order	9.6	9.1	7.4	5.8	5.3	9.8
Economy	12.8	12.0	9.1	6.1	7.8	14.5
Vietnam	17.3	20.0	18.8	12.7	11.2	19.4
Foreign Affairs	11.8	16.0	13.9	6.4	7.4	15.3
Defense	3.5	3.4	2.8	2.0	2.5	3.0
Government	5.3	3.8	4.7	23.1	21.8	6.6
GOP	14.0	12.7	14.2	12.6	13.2	8.2
Democrats	16.5	14.7	21.2	19.9	18.4	8.0
Totals	(1362)	(1516)	(1304)	(866)	(1140)	(4297)

[a]See notes for preceeding Tables. Percentages are based on frequencies. Stories were classified according to the general issue area emphasized in each story or report. Stories emphasizing other issues were deleted from the analysis.

Table 13. Favorable, Neutral, Unfavorable Issue Coverage by Policy, Area and Medium.[a]

	CBS				NBC				ABC			
Television News:	F	N	U	Total	F	N	U	Total	F	N	U	Total
Social Welfare	3.8%	84.6%	11.5%	(26)	4.2%	87.5%	8.3%	(24)	6.5%	83.9%	9.7%	(31)
Natural Resources	3.1	87.5	9.4	(32)	6.3	84.4	9.4	(32)	15.0	55.0	30.0	(20)
Labor-Mgt.	9.1	81.8	9.1	(11)	5.9	82.4	11.8	(17)	7.7	92.3	0.0	(13)
Civil Rights	0.0	84.4	15.6	(32)	0.0	88.6	11.4	(35)	4.0	72.0	24.0	(25)
Public Order	1.0	91.8	7.2	(97)	4.0	84.8	11.1	(99)	2.7	90.4	6.8	(73)
Economy	13.3	78.3	8.4	(83)	7.8	80.5	11.7	(77)	10.3	80.9	8.8	(68)
Vietnam	2.2	87.8	10.0	(229)	2.0	86.6	11.4	(298)	2.1	82.7	15.2	(243)
Foreign Affairs	3.4	91.5	5.1	(59)	8.9	88.6	2.5	(79)	5.6	84.7	9.7	(72)
Defense	2.5	92.5	5.0	(40)	4.3	89.4	6.4	(47)	0.0	93.5	6.5	(31)
Government	0.0	78.4	21.6	(51)	0.0	71.4	28.6	(42)	0.0	84.4	15.6	(45)
GOP	0.8	87.9	11.3	(124)	3.6	85.6	10.8	(111)	4.6	85.3	10.1	(109)
Democrats	0.9	83.6	15.5	(116)	3.3	84.6	12.2	(123)	1.9	84.3	13.8	(159)
Newspapers:	Tribune				Post				AP Wire			
Social Welfare	43.6	43.6	12.8	(39)	24.4	46.7	28.9	(45)	44.5	40.1	15.4	(247)
Natural Resources	50.0	42.9	7.1	(14)	48.3	44.8	6.9	(29)	47.7	35.1	17.1	(111)
Labor-Mgt.	34.4	56.3	9.4	(32)	24.2	66.7	9.1	(33)	25.9	37.0	37.0	(81)
Civil Rights	40.0	46.7	13.3	(15)	20.6	38.2	41.2	(34)	28.5	45.4	26.1	(207)
Public Order	44.0	34.0	22.0	(50)	28.8	40.7	30.5	(59)	14.6	69.5	15.8	(417)
Economy	43.4	32.1	24.5	(53)	33.7	44.9	21.3	(89)	37.2	43.9	18.9	(624)
Vietnam	20.9	51.8	27.3	(110)	25.0	46.1	28.9	(128)	12.5	65.7	21.7	(829)
Foreign Affairs	49.1	34.5	16.4	(55)	41.5	39.0	19.5	(82)	24.9	46.2	28.9	(654)
Defense	17.6	64.7	17.6	(17)	28.6	53.6	17.9	(28)	36.4	48.8	14.7	(129)
Government	9.7	58.6	31.9	(185)	12.7	52.8	34.5	(229)	7.1	54.1	38.7	(266)
GOP	44.0	52.0	4.0	(75)	34.2	59.8	6.0	(117)	16.7	66.2	17.1	(228)
Democrats	29.0	61.8	9.2	(131)	21.8	68.7	9.5	(147)	9.9	73.3	16.8	(232)

[a]See notes for Table 12. Percentages are based on frequencies.

Table 14. Favorable, Neutral, and Unfavorable Candidate Coverage in Issue News by Candidate, Issue, and Medium for Selected Issues.[a]

	Nixon				McGovern			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
A. Vietnam								
Television:								
CBS	2.1%	83.3%	14.6%	(48)	0.0%	81.8%	18.2%	(11)
NBC	2.4	90.2	7.3	(41)	0.0	100.0	0.0	(5)
ABC	5.3	84.2	10.5	(38)	0.0	57.1	42.9	(7)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	27.3	39.4	33.3	(99)	17.9	42.9	39.3	(56)
Post	20.4	44.2	35.4	(113)	33.8	44.6	21.5	(65)
AP Wire:	12.0	63.8	1.2	(276)	16.4	62.3	21.4	(159)
B. Economy								
Television:								
CBS	5.6	88.9	5.6	(18)	0.0	75.0	25.0	(4)
NBC	8.7	69.6	21.7	(23)	0.0	75.0	25.0	(4)
ABC	6.3	68.8	25.0	(16)	0.0	75.0	25.0	(4)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	33.3	44.4	22.2	(45)	27.3	27.3	45.5	(22)
Post	26.8	58.5	14.6	(82)	30.0	32.5	37.5	(40)
AP Wire:	13.7	69.4	16.9	(183)	13.2	53.9	32.9	(76)
C. Government Functioning								
Television:								
CBS	3.0	54.5	42.4	(33)	7.1	78.6	14.3	(14)
NBC	11.1	55.6	33.3	(27)	12.5	75.0	12.5	(8)
ABC	3.3	63.3	33.3	(30)	0.0	100.0	0.0	(8)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	23.5	44.1	32.4	(136)	16.3	48.9	34.8	(141)
Post	15.6	52.8	31.7	(180)	14.6	60.3	25.2	(151)
AP Wire:	5.3	67.3	27.4	(113)	6.7	82.7	10.7	(75)

Table 14. (continued)

D. Public Order

	Nixon				McGovern			
	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable	Total
Television:								
CBS	11.1%	77.8%	11.1%	(18)	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%	(7)
NBC	0.0	100.0	0.0	(10)	50.0	50.0	0.0	(2)
ABC	6.3	87.5	6.3	(6)	75.0	25.0	0.0	(4)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	18.2	54.5	27.3	(33)	22.2	44.4	33.3	(18)
Post	20.0	51.1	28.9	(45)	4.8	66.7	28.6	(21)
AP Wire:	12.5	48.2	39.3	(56)	9.5	71.4	19.0	(21)

E. Social Welfare

Television:								
CBS	0.0	92.3	7.7	(13)	12.5	62.5	25.0	(8)
NBC	0.0	80.0	20.0	(5)	0.0	0.0	100.0	(1)
ABC	0.0	85.7	14.3	(14)	0.0	0.0	100.0	(1)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	25.0	52.8	22.2	(36)	35.3	47.1	17.6	(17)
Post	17.5	45.0	37.5	(40)	38.1	42.9	19.0	(21)
AP Wire:	7.5	72.6	19.8	(106)	15.4	55.8	28.8	(52)

F. National Defense

Television:								
CBS	0.0	100.0	0.0	(9)	0.0	100.0	0.0	(5)
NBC	0.0	100.0	0.0	(10)	0.0	50.0	50.0	(2)
ABC	14.3	85.7	0.0	(7)	0.0	100.0	0.0	(1)
Newspapers:								
Tribune	20.0	53.3	26.7	(15)	42.9	14.3	42.9	(7)
Post	38.5	46.2	15.4	(26)	0.0	41.7	58.3	(12)
AP Wire:	9.1	84.8	6.1	(33)	10.0	50.0	40.0	(10)

[a]See notes for preceeding Tables. Stories were coded in terms of implications for Nixon or for McGovern.

Table 15. Perceptions of Bias in News by Medium, Type of Bias Perceived, and Subject of Bias.[a]

	Television News		Newspapers	
	Favor	Oppose	Favor	Oppose
Candidate:				
Nixon	6.4%	3.9%	14.0%	3.8%
McGovern	4.2	5.2	4.7	11.9
Neither	89.5	90.9	81.2	84.3

[a]Percentages are of the total sample (N=1034), and represent the electorate. Respondents were asked: "Would you say that the (newspaper read most frequently/ national television news reporting that you have seen) has taken sides for or against one of the candidates, or that it has not taken sides? Who does the reporting favor? Who does the reporting oppose?"

Table 16. Perceptions of Bias in Television Evening News Issue Coverage by Type of Bias and Issue.[a]

Issue:	Television News	
	Opposed	Favored
Employment	1.1%	1.1%
Housing	1.1	0.0
Welfare	6.5	5.6
Conservation	6.5	0.0
Labor	1.1	0.0
Busing	1.1	0.0
Treatment of Criminals	1.1	1.1
Law and Order	7.5	4.4
Cost of Living	0.0	2.2
Taxes	1.1	1.1
Vietnam	48.4	51.1
Communist Relations	1.1	0.0
Role of Military	1.1	3.3
GOP Campaign	11.8	12.2
Democratic Campaign	10.8	17.8

[a]Percentages were based on the number of respondents mentioning specific issues when asked whether television news had "taken sides" on any issues.

Table 17. Perceptions of Bias in Network News by Selected Variables.[a]

		Percent News Taken Sides	
Total Exposure to Television:		Candidate	Issue
	0-1 Hours	16.7%	27.0%
	2-3 Hours	14.9	19.0
	4+	11.8	19.1
Frequency Network News:			
	Low	11.4	19.6
	High	17.1	22.4
Network News Watched:			
	ABC	13.2	21.1
	CBS	13.8	20.1
	NBC	16.7	22.7
Information Level:			
	Low	6.3	12.0
	Medium	16.5	24.2
	High	16.4	23.0
Political Involvement:			
	High	21.8	28.9
	Medium	11.5	16.0
	Low	8.7	18.3
Party Identification:			
	Democratic	13.8	16.3
	Independent	14.8	24.9
	Republican	14.3	25.0

[a]Percentages were based on the sample who had been exposed to television news.

Table 18. Perceptions of Bias in Newspapers and Television News Coverage by Medium and Party Identification.[a]

	Party Identification								
Television News for:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All	Television News Against:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All
Nixon	8.0%	5.9%	4.7%	6.5%	Nixon	2.4%	4.1%	6.8%	4.0%
McGovern	2.6	4.4	6.8	4.2	McGovern	6.1	5.3	4.3	5.4
None	89.4	89.7	88.5	89.3	None	91.5	90.6	88.9	90.6
	(425)	(339)	(234)	(998)		(425)	(339)	(234)	(998)
Newspapers For:					Newspapers Against:				
Nixon	12.2	13.6	18.4	14.1	Nixon	3.8	4.7	2.6	3.8
McGovern	4.5	5.9	3.4	4.7	McGovern	10.6	11.2	16.2	12.1
None	83.3	80.5	78.2	81.2	None	85.6	84.1	81.2	84.1
	(425)	(339)	(234)	(998)		(425)	(339)	(234)	(998)

[a]Percentages are based on partisan identifiers who had been exposed to the respective media. For instance, among Democrats, 12.2 percent perceived newspapers as favoring Nixon and 4.5 percent as favoring McGovern.

Table 19. Candidate Preference and Reported Choice (Percentage for Nixon) by Perceived Bias in Media, Party Identification, and Medium.[a]

Percentage Who Preferred Nixon

Television News For:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All	Television News Against:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All
Nixon	23.5%	50.0%	81.8%	41.5%	Nixon	50.0%	64.3%	87.5%	70.0%
McGovern	45.5	60.0	87.5	66.7	McGovern	23.1	50.0	80.0	42.6
None	22.6	42.1	76.8	41.9	None	22.6	42.2	76.9	41.7
Newspapers For:					Newspapers Against:				
Nixon	19.2	56.5	90.7	53.2	Nixon	31.3	37.5	100.0	44.7
McGovern	31.6	40.0	87.5	44.5	McGovern	17.8	50.0	89.5	50.4
None	23.4	41.4	74.3	41.0	None	23.6	42.8	74.7	41.7

Percentage Who Chose Nixon

Television News For:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All	Television News Against:	Demo	Ind	Rep	All
Nixon	23.1%	61.5%	100.0%	49.0%	Nixon	75.0%	77.8%	92.9%	83.9%
McGovern	66.7	70.0	92.9	78.8	McGovern	28.6	66.7	100.0	55.8
None	31.8	53.0	91.1	53.3	None	31.0	52.8	91.1	52.6
Newspapers For:					Newspapers Against:				
Nixon	20.0	70.0	96.6	57.6	Nixon	54.5	44.4	23.1*	56.5
McGovern	50.0	46.2	100.0	56.7	McGovern	21.2	65.2	95.8	56.3
None	33.2	52.2	90.4	53.4	None	32.5	53.4	90.9	53.8

*Based on less than five cases.

[a]Percentages were based on the number of party identifiers who said the medium was for/against a candidate. For instance, among those who perceived the newspaper they read as favoring Nixon, 19.2 percent of the Democrats expressed a preference for Nixon.

Table 20. Percent with Selected Perceptions about Television News by Partisan Identification and Direction of Perceived Television News Bias.[a]

Television News For:	Demo	Ind	Rep	Television News Against:	Demo	Ind	Rep
Percent Who Like TV Newspeople[b]							
Nixon	50.0%	40.0%	54.5%	Nixon	50.0%	14.3%	12.5%
McGovern	45.5	20.0	12.5	McGovern	50.0	38.9	60.0
None	54.5	12.5	62.8	None	64.0	52.9	62.5
Percent Television Most Credible[c]							
Nixon	66.7	42.1	72.7	Nixon	37.5	42.9	23.1
McGovern	44.4	40.0	23.1	McGovern	59.1	44.4	70.0
None	59.4	52.0	52.0	None	60.2	51.6	52.3
Percent Television Least Credible[c]							
Nixon	11.1	15.0	20.0	Nixon	30.0	14.3	23.1
McGovern	27.3	13.3	23.1	McGovern	13.6	16.7	22.2
None	7.5	8.5	6.7	None	7.3	8.4	6.7
Percent Newspeople Cannot be Trusted[d]							
Nixon	20.7	20.0	22.2	Nixon	37.5	41.7	50.0
McGovern	33.3	50.0	50.0	McGovern	27.3	12.5	25.0
None	9.9	15.9	13.5	None	9.6	16.7	13.4
Percent TV News Prejudiced[e]							
Nixon	15.4	29.4	0.0	Nixon	0.0	7.7	25.0
McGovern	0.0	7.1	25.0	McGovern	13.6	25.0	0.0
None	12.4	12.7	8.0	None	12.5	13.0	7.9

[a]Percentages were based on the number of identifiers who said TV news was for/against a candidate. For instance, among those who perceive TV news as favoring Nixon and who are Democrats, 50.0 percent report they like TV newspeople.

[b]Respondents were asked to agree strongly, agree, slightly agree, slightly disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement "I like TV Newspeople." Responses were collapsed so that the two extreme categories were combined. Slightly agree and disagree, not sure, and do not know responses were combined in a neutral category.

[c]Respondents were asked: "If newspapers, television, radio and magazines gave conflicting reports about something, which would you be most likely to believe? Which would you be least likely to believe?"

[d]Respondents were asked: "Would you say that television newspeople cannot really be trusted, or that they can be trusted?"

[e]Respondents were asked: "Do you think most national television newspeople are prejudiced against common people in this country, or that they are not prejudiced against common people?"

NOTES

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1. Extensive analysis of television news showed little variation in the pre-campaign and campaign phases of news coverage, although slight shifts in substantive issue concerns were apparent. See Hofstetter (1975). It is likely that imagery and information about the major party nominees was widely disseminated prior to September 1, 1972.

2 Coders were thoroughly indoctrinated concerning the purposes of the project and the rationale for the specific content indicators that they were responsible for coding. Careful attention was given to supervision, especially in the television analysis phase of the project. The coding supervisor played each videotaped news story one at a time, instructed coders on the specific story emphasis to be coded, and responded to questions that coders might have concerning their own coding assignments. All material for every fifth broadcast was checked for reliability in this analysis (intercoder agreement on most indicators ranged from 70 percent to 100 percent), and attention was given to rectifying problems that were discerned during the analysis by the supervisor. Coders working on the AP wires and newspaper materials were instructed in a similar vein. Reliabilities were recorded less frequently for this material, but tended to be even greater than those reported for TV news stories. Coding is detailed in Judge and Hofstetter, 1974; and Hofstetter and Judge, 1974).

3 Stories and wire reports about major parties and campaign efforts were coded as a single category, since they tend to be indistinguishable in most instances.

4 News about Nixon in his role as candidate was distinguished from coverage of administration activities. If all coverage about the administration was combined with Nixon coverage, then Nixon received substantially more coverage than McGovern. See Meadow (1973).

5 Fieldwork for this and a second national survey of major party campaign leaders was conducted by National Analysts, Inc. Somewhat lower initial completion rates than usual were attained in the pre-election survey due to special requirements. The survey was divided into four separate waves, conducted at ten-day intervals, so that a quasi-panel of respondents based on interpenetrating groups resulted. Little variation in response was evident among the groups. The post-election component of the survey was conducted by telephone shortly after the election.

6 A much more comprehensive analysis of what network news carried about candidates, parties, and issues is reported in Hofstetter (1975), and cannot be summarized here because of length. Basically, the degree to which networks paralleled each other in coverage was incredible. Hundreds of comparisons reflected (what has been reported in this paper) the standardization of content and presentation in news reporting on television.

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